

Malayalam, Step by Step, Root by Root

An etymology-driven curriculum, built one word at a time

Adhithya Rajasekaran

This edition compiled incrementally — new chapters added as they
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Preface

This book teaches Malayalam one word at a time, and it teaches each word by taking it apart. It is written for someone starting from zero — who may not read a single Malayalam letter — so the script is taught *inside the word lessons themselves*: each word introduces exactly the letters it needs, so you learn to read **നമസ്കാരം** *and* learn that it means “greetings” in the same few minutes. There is no alphabet drill to sit through first. (A reader who already reads Malayalam simply skims the “letters in this word” notes.)

Malayalam is the youngest of the four literary **Dravidian** languages — a family entirely separate from the Indo-European one that gave us English, Latin, and Sanskrit — and it is the **closest sister of Tamil**, having split from it only about a thousand years ago. That double nature runs through this book: its everyday core is strikingly Tamil-like (“thanks” is **നന്ദി** *nandi*, twin of Tamil *nanri*; “no” is **ഇല്ല** *illa*, twin of Tamil *illai*), while a vast Sanskrit layer — the old *Maṇipravāḷam* tradition mixed the two freely — gives it a Sanskrit formal greeting (**നമസ്കാരം**) and the largest alphabet of the family. Each lesson sets the word beside its cousins across the family — English always, and Sanskrit, Hindi, and the other Dravidian languages where they illuminate — every form supplied in full, so no prior knowledge of any of them is assumed.

How to use this book

Every numbered section is one word, or one small phrase, and takes a few minutes — the length of a queue, an errand, or the walk to the bus. Read them in order the first time through: each section stands on the ones before it, and nothing is used before it has been taught. After that the book becomes reference, and you can open it anywhere.

Say the Malayalam out loud wherever you can. The prompts under *Your turn* are written to be spoken, and saying a word is most of what makes it stay. The questions under *Before you move on* carry their own answers in

brackets: cover them, answer from memory, then look.

Nothing here is gated behind the alphabet. Each lesson introduces exactly the letters and sounds its own word needs, so you are reading real words from the first page rather than drilling a chart. The whole script is gathered in a reference at the back of the book — somewhere to look things up when you are curious, never a chapter to sit through first.

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Chapter 1

Greetings

Modes:  voice (1)  eyes (4)  pen (10)  **Hands-free start:** first 1 of 15 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can greet someone in Malayalam, read and write namaskāram from sound, recognize the reply, and choose an appropriate response.

Greet and respond, read namaskāram aloud, then write it from dictation and check the three practised groups.

1.1 Namaskaram — first hear the greeting

Imagine meeting someone with your palms together and a small bow. First, only listen: *namaskāram*.

The exchange

Namaskāram is a respectful Malayalam greeting. It can open a conversation, and it can also close one. Hear its five beats slowly: *na-ma-s-kā-ram*. Answer with the same greeting once.

The Malayalam spelling is deliberately absent from this first pass. The next tiny lessons give your eye and hand no more than three reusable shapes at a time. Only after every shape is familiar will the book show the whole written greeting.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

The greeting comes from Sanskrit *namas*, “a bow or homage,” plus *kāra*, “a making,” from the root *kr*, “to do.” Its memory hook is therefore **the making of a bow**. Malayalam is Tamil’s closest sister, but this formal greeting is part of Malayalam’s large Sanskrit layer. The same idea, five ways:

Language	“Hello”	Source
Malayalam	<i>namaskārami</i>	Sanskrit
Telugu	<i>namaskārami</i>	Sanskrit
Kannada	<i>namaskāra</i>	Sanskrit
Hindi	<i>namaste</i>	Sanskrit
Tamil	<i>vaṇakkam</i>	native Dravidian

Even Tamil’s closest sister took the Sanskrit greeting; Tamil alone kept its own. Hold that beside the next lesson, where the word for “thanks” splits the family the other way round.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *namaskārami* once as a greeting
- its five beats — *na-ma-s-kā-ram*
- its literal memory hook — “the making of a bow”

Before you move on

What can you say when you meet someone respectfully? (***Namaskāram***.) What gesture and literal history help you remember it? (**A small bow; “the making of a bow.”**) Do you need to decode its Malayalam spelling yet? (**No**. The script starts next with only two shapes.)

1.2 ம · ன — two sounds you already heard

Say *na-ma* — the first two beats of *namaskārami*. Your hand meets only those two familiar sounds today.

Script

Malayalam is an abugida: a bare consonant already carries a short *a*.

- **ᵐ** is *na*.
- **ᵑ** is *ma*.

Put them together: **ᵐᵑ**, *na-ma*. Keep both models visible.

Writing — observe and trace

Finger-trace **ᵐ** once, then **ᵑ** once. Trace **ᵐᵑ** once from left to right. Say *na-ma* after your finger stops. This is observation with a visible model, not a memory test.

Before you move on

Point to *na*. (**ᵐ**.) Point to *ma*. (**ᵑ**.) What vowel did you write after either consonant? (**None** — the short *a* is inherent.)

1.3 ᵐᵑ — one guided copy

Keep **ᵐᵑ** visible. Point left to right and say *na-ma*.

Writing — copy with help

Copy **ᵐᵑ** once directly below the visible model. Look back as often as you need. Check **ᵐ** first and **ᵑ** second; repair only one place, then stop.

Before you move on

Read your copy. Which longer greeting begins with these two beats? (***Namaskāram***.) No new shape was added here: the work was moving from a finger trace to one supported copy.

1.4 ᵐᵑ — one delayed copy

Look at **ᵐᵑ** for five seconds. Say *na-ma*, then cover the model.

Writing — retrieve after a delay

Write the two shapes once while the model is covered. If one shape will not come, peek briefly, cover it again, and finish. This is retrieval practice, not a speed test.

Before you move on

Uncover **നമ** and compare. Repair one shape if needed. What changed from the last lesson? (**The model was hidden before writing.**)

1.5 Two heard beats — write them

Cover the answer lower on this page. No new Malayalam shape is hiding here.

Writing — short dictation

Hear: *na-ma*

Write the two-beat unit from sound alone. Now uncover and compare: **നമ**. Check **ന** first and **മ** second. Repair one place if needed.

Before you move on

You have moved the same small unit through trace, visible copy, delayed copy, and dictation. Say the complete greeting it begins. (*Namaskāram.*)

1.6 ന · ് · ങ്ക — build ska without a leap

Write **നമ** from the heard cue *na-ma*. Now set it aside. This lesson adds exactly three shapes.

Script

- **ന** is *sa*, with its inherent *a*.
- **ഃ** is the *chandrakkala*. Attach it to remove that inherent vowel: **നഃ**.
- **ക** is *ka*.

Join the vowel-less first consonant to the next one: സ്ക, *ska*. The cluster is not a fourth shape; it is the three pieces you just met working together.

Writing — observe and trace three pieces

Keep the models visible. Trace സ്, then ി, then ക once each. Point through സ്ക and say *ska*. Stop after one slow pass.

Before you move on

What does ി remove? (**The inherent vowel.**) Read സ് and then സ്. (*sa; s.*) What does സ്ക say? (*ska.*)

1.7 ാ · റ · ൡ — finish the sound inventory

Read സ്ക once: *ska*. The greeting needs only three more written pieces.

Script

- ാ is the long-*ā* vowel sign. Attach it to known ക: കാ, *kā*.
- റ is *ra*.
- ൡ is the *anusvaram*, the final nasal *m* here. With റ: രം, *ram*.

These are the last new shapes in the greeting.

Writing — observe and trace the last three

Trace ാ, റ, and ൡ once each while the models remain visible. Then trace കാ and രം once. Say *kā-ram* after your finger stops.

Before you move on

What makes ക into കാ? (**The long-*ā* sign, ാ.**) What does the final circle ൡ contribute here? (**A final nasal *m*.**) How many new shapes remain before reading the whole greeting? (**None.**)

1.8 നമസ്കാരം — every shape is already yours

Say *namaskārami*. Now the written greeting may appear: it contains no unfamiliar shape.

Script — assemble and read

ന + മ + സ + ് + ക + ാ + ര + ു → നമസ്കാരം

Read the pieces in the groups you practised:

- നമ — *na-ma*
- സ്ക — *ska*
- ാരം — *ā-ram*

Together: നമസ്കാരം, *namaskārami*. The conjunct സ്ക is still just സ with its vowel removed by ്, joined to ക.

Writing — one visible whole-word copy

Keep നമസ്കാരം visible and copy it once in the three groups above. Look back whenever needed. Independent production waits for the next tiny lesson.

Before you move on

Read നമസ്കാരം. How many new shapes did this lesson add? **(None.)** What does the greeting literally evoke? **(The making of a bow.)**

1.9 One heard greeting — write the whole

Cover the written answer below. You have already traced every shape, carried നമ through dictation, and copied the whole greeting once.

Writing — whole-word dictation

Hear: *namaskāraṇi* — “greetings”

Write the greeting from sound alone. Use the three remembered groups: *na-ma*, *ska*, *ā-ram*. Then uncover and compare: നമസ്കാരം. Repair one group if needed; do not rewrite the whole word.

Before you move on

Read your greeting and say what it does. (**It respectfully opens or closes a conversation.**) This is independent production of a fully taught word, not a preview of untaught shapes.

1.10 നന്ദി (*nandi*) — “thank you,” and the Tamil kinship made visible

After a Sanskrit greeting, the native core shows itself: Malayalam’s “thank you” is **not** the Sanskrit word its neighbours Kannada and Telugu use. It is *nandi* — the very cousin of Tamil’s *nanri*.

The letters in this word

(*Skim if you read Malayalam.*)

- ന = “na.”
- ന്ദി = “ndi” — a **conjunct**: ന (na) loses its vowel and joins ദ (da) into “nd,” then the “i” **vowel sign** gives “ndi.”

Left to right: ന · ന്ദി = *na-ndi* →

നന്ദി = **nandi**

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

നന്ദി (*nandi*) is **native Dravidian**, from the same root **nal / nan** (“good”) that gives Tamil **nanri** (“goodness → gratitude”).

Malayalam and Tamil split from one language about a thousand years ago, so their oldest, most everyday words are near-twins — and “thanks” is a perfect example: Malayalam *nandi*, Tamil *nanri*, one

word lightly reshaped.

Its neighbours went the other way: Kannada and Telugu use the Sanskrit *dhanyavāda*. So the map of “thanks” traces the family’s fault-line exactly — Tamil and Malayalam on the native side, Kannada and Telugu on the Sanskrit side.

The same idea, five ways:

Language	“Thanks”	Note
Malayalam	<i>nandi</i> (നന്ദി)	native (root <i>nal</i> , “good”)
Tamil	<i>nanri</i> (நன்றி)	the same native root
Kannada	<i>dhanyavāda</i> (ಧನ್ಯವಾದ)	Sanskrit
Telugu	<i>dhanyavādamulu</i> (ధన్యవాదములు)	Sanskrit
Hindi	<i>dhanyavād</i> / <i>shukriyā</i>	Sanskrit / Perso-Arabic

Why it’s said this way

Like *nanri* in Tamil, *nandi* is a touch formal — among close family it can feel oddly stiff, as if you were thanking a stranger; warmth is usually assumed and shown in tone. The explicit word is for when you want to *mark* the gratitude. (In casual speech you’ll also hear the English *thanks*.)

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- na · ndi → “nandi”
- the pair across the split — Malayalam *nandi*, Tamil *nanri*
- how *ṇ* joins two consonants into one “nd” block

Before you move on

Read നന്ദി. Is it native or a Sanskrit loan, and which language has the twin word? (Native — root *nal*, “good”; Tamil’s *nanri*.) Which two Dravidian languages use the *Sanskrit* word for thanks instead?

(Kannada, Telugu.)

1.11 അതെ (athe) — “yes,” literally “that [is so]”

The plain “yes” — and a small window into how Malayalam thinks, because the word is really the pointing-word “that.”

The letters in this word

(*Skim if you read Malayalam.*)

- അ = “a” — an **independent vowel** (the word starts with a vowel, so it gets a full letter).
- തെ = “the” — ത (tha, a soft *th* as in *this*) with the “e” **vowel sign** written *in front* of the consonant.

Left to right: അ · തെ = *a-the* →

അതെ = **athe** = “yes.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

അതെ (*athe*) is native Malayalam, and it grows from അത് (*atū*), “that.” To say “yes,” Malayalam essentially says “**that [is so]**” — you affirm by pointing at the truth of what was said. Its natural partner is the negative *alla*, “[it is] not that” — the next lesson.

Grammar Lens: yes and no as “that is” / “not that”

Malayalam’s yes/no pair are demonstratives in disguise: *athe* (“that [is so]”) and *alla* (“not that”). Like its sisters, Malayalam also readily answers by **echoing the verb** of the question (*vannu*, “[I] came,” for “did you come?”). Bank *athe* as the simple word, but hear the logic underneath — you agree by confirming *that* is how things are.

Your turn

- *Say it:* a · the → “athe”
- *Say it:* note the “e” sign sits *before* ത but is read *after* it

- *Say it:* “athe” — “yes, that’s so”
- *Recall:* say *namaskāraṇi*

Before you move on

Read അതെ. What everyday word is it built from, and so what does “yes” literally assert? (*atŭ*, “that” — so “yes” = “that [is so]”.) Where does the “e” vowel sign sit, and where is it read? (Written before the consonant, read after.)

1.12 അ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: നമസ്കാരം — can you still read it back?

One character this time. One only. It has been sitting in front of you on pages you have already read.

Script you’ll notice: അ

അ — *a*.

It is an **independent vowel** — the shape this vowel takes when a word *begins* with it, rather than the sign it becomes inside a word.

You have already said a word that starts with it.

- അതെ *athe* — yes (“that [is so]”)

Malayalam writes a word-initial vowel with a letter of its own. Inside a word this vowel would be a small sign hung on a consonant; at the front of a word there is no consonant to hang it on, so the vowel stands up as അ.

Writing: അ — **copy what you see**

Put your pen on അ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find അ in the ones that have it
അതെ · നന്ദി · നമസ്കാരം
- *Trace it:* അ three times, saying *a* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find അ once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — അ? What sound does it carry? (*a*)
Where in a word does a vowel need a full letter of its own? (At the start.)

1.13 ഇല്ല (illa) — “no,” the word Malayalam and Tamil share almost exactly

The partner of *athe*, and more family evidence: this Malayalam “no” is essentially the **same word** as Tamil’s *illai* and Kannada’s *illa* — the old Dravidian *il-* runs right through.

The letters in this word

(*Skim if you read Malayalam.*)

- ഇ = “i” — an **independent vowel** (word-initial, so a full letter, like അ in *athe*).
- ള്ല = “lla” — a **conjunct**: ല (la) loses its vowel and joins another ല (la) into a doubled, held “ll.”

Left to right: ഇ · ള്ല = *i-lla* →

ഇല്ല = *illa*

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

ഇല്ല (*illa*) is built on the ancient Dravidian root **il**, “not-being, absence” — so, exactly like Tamil *illai*, it really means “[it] is not,

[there] is not,” and serves as the everyday “no.” The positive partner will come much later, after you have enough sentence pieces to use the contrast.

The same idea, five ways:

Language	“No / isn’t”	Note
Malayalam	<i>illa</i> (ഇല്ല)	native, root <i>il-</i>
Tamil	<i>illai</i> (இல்லை)	the same root
Kannada	<i>illa</i> (ಇಲ್ಲ)	the same root
Telugu	<i>lēdu</i> (లేదు)	native, a different root
Hindi	<i>nahī</i> (नहीं)	Indo-European (unrelated)

Grammar Lens: Dravidian negates by *being*

English inserts *not* / *no*. Malayalam — like Tamil and Kannada — can instead use a **negative verb of existence**. So *illa* is both the plain “no” and, later, a word that can make a whole sentence mean “there is not.” Today, only the short answer is yours to use. This is a **shared Dravidian inheritance**, strongest across the Tamil–Malayalam pair: Tamil *illai*, Malayalam *illa*, Kannada *illa* — one family, one way to say a thing is not. (Recall Telugu was the outlier here, using *lēdu*.)

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- $i \cdot lla \rightarrow \text{“illa”}$
- the pair — *athe* (“yes”) / *illa* (“no”)
- *illa* once as the short answer “no”

Before you move on

Read ഇല്ല. Literally, is it closer to “no” or “is not”? (“Is not / there is not.”) Which languages share this exact *il-* root, and which Dravidian sister does *not*? (Tamil and Kannada share it; Telugu is the outlier, with *lēdu*.)

1.14 ശരി (śari) — “okay,” the whole-family word once more

The easy middle between “yes” and “no”: “okay, alright, correct.” You have now met it in four languages — Tamil and Kannada *sari*, Telugu *sarē*, and here Malayalam *śari*.

The letters in this word

(Skim if you read Malayalam.)

- ശ = “śa” — a *sh*-sound (the palatal ś). Malayalam, having borrowed so much Sanskrit, keeps the full set of Sanskrit sibilants (ś, ṣ, s) as separate letters — more than Tamil, which makes do with one.
- രി = “ri” — ര (ra) with the “i” vowel sign.

Left to right: ശ · രി = śa-ri →

ശരി = śari = “okay / correct.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

ശരി (*śari*) is the pan-Dravidian “**correct, right** → **okay, agreed**,” the verbal nod of Malayalam. It is the same family word carried by Tamil and Kannada as *sari* and Telugu as *sarē*; Malayalam simply spells its opening sound with ശ (ś). Doubled, *śari śari*, it means “yes yes, fine.”

Grammar Lens: one word, four scripts

sari / *sarē* / *śari* is the clearest single proof of how close these four languages are: essentially one word and one meaning, wearing four different scripts. As you learn to read each, catching a shared word change its clothes but not its sense is the fastest way to feel the whole Dravidian family at once — and the reason the four are worth seeing side by side.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- śa · ri → “śari”
- the everyday triple — *athe* (yes) · *illa* (no) · *śari* (okay)
- the word across the family — *sari* / *sarē* / *śari*

Before you move on

Read ശരി. What does it mean, and how do its Tamil, Kannada, and Telugu twins sound? (“Okay, correct”; *sari*, *sari*, *sarē*.) Why does Malayalam keep a separate ശ (*ś*) letter where Tamil uses one all-purpose sibilant? (It borrowed heavily from Sanskrit and kept Sanskrit’s sibilant letters.)

1.15 Chapter 1 — a five-word recap

Five words, and a first handful of Malayalam letters read straight off the page. Let’s gather only what you have already learned and make it feel easy.

The exchange — read them back

Sound each out, left to right, before checking:

Read		Meaning	Origin
നമസ്കാരം	<i>namaskārami</i>	hello / greetings	Sanskrit
നന്ദി	<i>nandi</i>	thank you	native (= Tamil <i>nanri</i>)
അതെ	<i>athe</i>	yes	native (“that [is so]”)
ഇല്ല	<i>illa</i>	no / there isn’t	native (= Tamil <i>illai</i>)
ശരി	<i>śari</i>	okay	native (= <i>sari</i>)

The letters that did it: consonants carry a built-in “a”; the **chan-drakkala** strips that vowel so consonants can **join into conjuncts** (ന്മ, ന്, ല്); a **vowel sign** swaps the vowel (ഃ ā, ി i, ൈ e — the *e*-sign written *before* its consonant); the **anusvāram** (ം) adds a final nasal; and a word-initial vowel gets a **full letter** (അ, ഇ).

Notice how **Tamil-like** the native core is: four of the five everyday words (*nandi*, *athe*, *illa*, *śari*) are shared with Tamil — because Malayalam *is* Tamil’s closest sister — while only the formal greeting reached for Sanskrit.

Why it's said this way

Malayalam has a warm departure phrase built around going and coming back. It belongs in the later chapter where you learn those actions one at a time. For now, repeating the greeting is enough when you part.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- all five — namaskāraṇi · nandi · athe · illa · śari
- greet and thank — “namaskāraṇi!” ... “nandi.”

Writing checkpoint

Hide the model. Hear *namaskāraṇi* once, write നമസ്കാരം, then uncover the word in the table and check one group at a time: നമ · സ്ക · ാരം. A mismatch is a signal to repeat the earlier two-minute shape lesson, not to push faster.

Script check — the letters of this chapter

Cover the romanizations. Find each letter once in the Malayalam above, then say the word it sits in.

- അതെ — അ a
- *Look:* at each letter, then find it in the word beside it

Before you move on

Read all five aloud. Which one is Sanskrit, and which four are native Dravidian shared with Tamil? (Sanskrit: *namaskāraṇi*. Native: *nandi*, *athe*, *illa*, *śari*.) Which word can mean both “okay” and a casual sign-off? (*śari*.)

That completes the four Dravidian first chapters — Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam. Next chapter starts introducing yourself, one short possession form at a time.

Chapter 2

Introducing Yourself

Modes: 🗣️ voice (2) 👁️ eyes (6) ✍️ pen (12) 🗣️ **Hands-free start:** first 1 of 20 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can introduce myself in Malayalam, give my name, and understand the other person’s name.

Complete ML-C02-practice, the canonical closing checkpoint, and demonstrate the chapter promise: introduce myself in Malayalam, give my name, and understand the other person’s name.

2.1 പേര് (pēr) — “name,” the native Dravidian word

“Name” — native, as you’d expect from Tamil’s closest sister.

The letters in this word

(Skim if you read Malayalam.) പ (pa) + േ (the ē-sign) → പേ (pē); റ്റ് (bare r, chillu). Read പേ · റ്റ് → pēr.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

പേര് (pēr, “name”) is **native Dravidian**, from Proto-Dravidian *pēr — the same word as Tamil *peyar* and Telugu *pēru*, a cousin of Kannada *hesaru* (*p*→*h*). Being Tamil’s closest sister, Malayalam keeps the native word, *not* Sanskrit *nāma* (Hindi *nām*, English *name*).

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “pēr”
- its cousins — *pēr* / *peyar* / *pēru* / *hesaru*

Before you move on

Is பெர் native or borrowed, and what Tamil word is its twin?
(Native Dravidian, **pēr*; Tamil *peyar*.)

2.2 ஶ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ஶ — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has been sitting in front of you on pages you have already read.

Script you’ll notice: ஶ

ஶ — *pa*.

It is a **consonant**, and in this script a consonant is never bare: it comes with an *a* already in it. So it is not *p*, it is **pa**.

You have already said a word that begins with it.

- பெர் *pēr* — name

It is the first shape of the first word of this chapter, so it is the easiest one in the book to go back and find.

Writing: ஶ — copy what you see

Put your pen on ஶ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find പ in the ones that have it

പേര് · അതെ · നമസ്കാരം

- *Trace it:* പ three times, saying *pa* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find പ once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — പ? What sound does it carry? (*pa.*)
Name one word you already say that contains it.

2.3 േ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: പ — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has been sitting in front of you on pages you have already read.

Script you'll notice: േ

േ — $\bar{e}$.

It is a **vowel sign**. It is not a letter and never stands alone: it attaches to a consonant and **replaces** the *a* built into it with $\bar{e}$. Replaces, not adds — the *a* is gone.

Look at പേര് again. The പ you read on the page before carries an *a* of its own — *pa*. The hook standing in front of it, േ, takes that *a* away and puts a long $\bar{e}$ in its place: *pa* → *pē*.

- പേര് *pē*r — name

Malayalam prints this sign to the LEFT of its consonant even though the vowel is pronounced AFTER it. Your eye reads it first; your mouth says it second.

Writing: േ — copy what you see

Put your pen on േ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find േ in the ones that have it

പേര് · പ · േ

- *Trace it:* േ three times, saying $\bar{e}$ as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find േ once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — േ? What sound does it carry? ($\bar{e}$)
Which side of its consonant is it printed on, and which side does it sound on? (Printed to the left; pronounced after.)

2.4 എന്റെ (enre) — “my”

“My” — native Dravidian.

The letters in this word

(*Skim if you read Malayalam.*) എ (independent e) + the conjunct ന്റെ (nre) → **enre**.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

എന്റെ (enre) means “my.” It belongs to Malayalam’s native Dravidian first-person family, not to the Indo-European family behind English *I/my*. You will meet the related word for “I” in its own lesson; today you

only need *enre*.

Your turn

- *Say it*: “enre”
- *Say it*: *enre* once with its meaning, “my”
- *Recall*: read നന്ദി

Before you move on

What does എന്റെ mean? (“My.”) Is it native Dravidian or an Indo-European loan? (Native Dravidian.)

2.5 എ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: േ — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has been sitting in front of you on pages you have already read.

Script you’ll notice: എ

എ — *e*.

It is an **independent vowel** — the shape this vowel takes when a word *begins* with it, rather than the sign it becomes inside a word.

You have already said a word that starts with it.

- എന്റെ *enre* — my

You met its sign form two pages ago: േ inside പേര്. One vowel, two jobs — a sign when it lands on a consonant, the letter എ when it opens a word.

Writing: എ — copy what you see

Put your pen on എ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find എ in the ones that have it
എന്റെ · പേര് · അതെ
- *Trace it:* എ three times, saying *e* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find എ once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — എ? What sound does it carry? (*e*)
Name one word you already say that contains it.

2.6 റ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: എ — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has been sitting in front of you on pages you have already read.

Script you'll notice: റ

റ — *ra*.

It is a **consonant**, and in this script a consonant is never bare: it comes with an *a* already in it. So it is not *r*, it is **ra**.

Malayalam has two *r* letters. ര is the soft one you have been reading inside നമസ്കാരം and ശരി. റ is the hard one, made further forward in the mouth — and it is the one hiding inside your new word.

- എന്റെ *enre* — my

Here റ sits underneath ന as the stacked pair ന്റ, which is why it does not announce itself at first. Find its curl in the lower half.

Writing: ഓ — copy what you see

Put your pen on ഓ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ഓ in the ones that have it

എന്റെ · ശരി · ഓ

- *Trace it:* ഓ three times, saying *ra* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ഓ once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ഓ? What sound does it carry? (*ra*.)
Which of the two *r* letters is this — the soft റ or the hard ഓ? (The hard one.)

2.7 ആണ് (āṇ) — “is,” where Malayalam breaks with its sisters

A small surprise: Malayalam has a real word for “is,” where its Dravidian sisters have none.

The letters in this word

(*Skim if you read Malayalam.*) ആ (independent long *ā*) + ണ് (bare retroflex *ṇ*) → āṇ.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

ആണ് (*āṇ*, “is”) is Malayalam’s **copula** — a real “to be” word, grown from the verb ആക (*āka*, “to be, to become”). Here’s the point: Tamil, Kannada, and Telugu all use the **zero copula** — *no* word for “is.” Yet Malayalam, though it is Tamil’s *closest* sister, grammaticalised a “to be” verb. So where Tamil says only *en peyar Arun*, Malayalam adds *āṇ*: *enre pēr Arun āṇ*.

Grammar Lens: the verb comes last

Like Hindi’s *hai* (and unlike Tamil), *āṇ* closes the sentence — Malayalam is subject–object–**verb**: “my name Arun **is**.” (Malayalis sometimes drop *āṇ* in fast speech, but the full form keeps it.)

Your turn

- *Say it*: “*āṇ*”
- *Say it*: the contrast — Tamil *en peyar Arun* (no verb) vs. Malayalam *enre pēr Arun āṇ*
- *Recall*: say *athe*, then say *illa*, then read ശരി

Before you move on

What is ആണ്, and how does Malayalam differ from Tamil here? (The copula “is,” from *āka*; Malayalam *has* a word for “is” where Tamil uses none.)

2.8 ആ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: റ — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has been sitting in front of you on pages you have already read.

Script you’ll notice: ആ

ആ — *ā*.

It is an **independent vowel** — the shape this vowel takes when a word *begins* with it, rather than the sign it becomes inside a word.

You have already said a word that starts with it.

- ആണ് *āṇ* — is

അ was the short one, from the yes-word. ആ is the same vowel held longer, and the shape says so: the short letter grows a loop on its right. Say them as a pair — *a · ā* — then look again.

Writing: ആ — copy what you see

Put your pen on ആ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ആ in the ones that have it
ആണ് · അതെ · ആ
- *Trace it:* ആ three times, saying *ā* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ആ once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ആ? What sound does it carry? (*ā*.)

Which of the two is longer — അ or ആ? (ആ.)

2.9 ഞ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ആ — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has been sitting in front of you on pages you have already read.

Script you'll notice: ണ

ണ — *ṇa*.

It is a **consonant**, and in this script a consonant is never bare: it comes with an *a* already in it. So it is not *ṇ*, it is **ṇa**.

You have already said a word that ends with it.

- ആണ് *āṇ* — is (the copula)

This is not the ണ of നന്ദി. ണ is a **retroflex** *ṇ*: the tongue curls back to the roof of the mouth. Malayalam keeps the two apart in spelling because it keeps them apart in sound.

Writing: ണ — copy what you see

Put your pen on ണ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ണ in the ones that have it

ആണ് · നന്ദി · ണ

- *Trace it:* ണ three times, saying *ṇa* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ണ once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ണ? What sound does it carry? (*ṇa*.)
Name one word you already say that contains it.

2.10 എന്റെ പേര് ... ആണ് (enre pēr ... āṇṁ) — “my name is...”

Assemble the three atoms — including the copula *āṇṁ* that Tamil lacks.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

- enre (my) + pēr (name) + your name + āṇṁ (is).

എന്റെ പേര് ... ആണ് = “my name ... is” = “**my name is...**”

Enre pēr Arun āṇṁ. → “My name is Arun.”

Grammar Lens: verb last

Malayalam is subject–object–**verb**, so *āṇṁ* (“is”) sits at the end — “my name Arun **is**,” like Hindi *hai* and unlike Tamil’s verbless *en peyar Arun*.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “enre pēr ... āṇṁ” with your name
- note the copula at the end — *āṇṁ*

Before you move on

Give your name in Malayalam. (*Enre pēr ... āṇṁ.*) What word does Malayalam add that Tamil omits? (The copula *āṇṁ*, “is.”)

2.11 നീ / നിങ്ങൾ (nī / niṇṇaḷ) — “you,” familiar and respectful

“You” — respect made by the plural, the family’s shared trick.

The letters in this word

(*Skim if you read Malayalam.*) നീ (*nī*); നിങ്ങൾ (*niṇṇaḷ*).

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

നീ (*nī*, familiar “you”) ← Proto-Dravidian ***nīn** — the same native root as Tamil *nī*, Kannada *nīnu*, Telugu *nuvvu*. നിങ്ങൾ (*ninnāḷ*) is the respectful/plural “you” — *nī* + a plural ending, the exact cousin of Tamil *nīṅgaḷ*.

Grammar Lens: respect by the plural

nī (familiar) vs. *ninnāḷ* (respectful, literally plural) — the family’s shared politeness-by-plural, same idea as French *vous*. For a first meeting, **niññāḷ**.

Your turn

- *Say it*: “nī” (familiar), “ninnāḷ” (respectful)
- *Recall*: read പേര്

Before you move on

How does Malayalam make “you” respectful, and which Tamil word is *ninnāḷ*’s twin? (By the plural; Tamil *nīṅgaḷ*.)

2.12 ീ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ണ — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has been sitting in front of you on pages you have already read.

Script you’ll notice: ീ

ീ — *ī*.

It is a **vowel sign**. It is not a letter and never stands alone: it attaches to a consonant and **replaces** the *a* built into it with *ī*. Replaces, not adds — the *a* is gone.

Look at നീ. The ണ you already read carries an *a*; the sign hanging off its right, ീ, replaces that *a* with a long *ī*: *na* → *nī*.

- നീ *nī* — you (familiar)

It is the long partner of the small hook you have been reading at the end of **നന്ദി** and **ശരി**; that one is short *i*, this one is held.

Writing: ി — copy what you see

Put your pen on **ി** and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find **ി** in the ones that have it

നി · ന · ി

- *Trace it:* **ി** three times, saying *ī* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find **ി** once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — **ി**? What sound does it carry? (*ī*.) Name one word you already say that contains it.

2.13 ശ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: **ി** — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has been sitting in front of you on pages you have already read.

Script you'll notice: ശ

ശ — *ṣ*.

It is a **chillu** — a consonant with its vowel stripped away and given a shape of its own, so that it can end a word without a dangling mark.

You have already said a word that ends with it.

- നിങ്ങൾ *ninnal* — you (respectful)

Every consonant in this script arrives carrying an *a*. A word that ends in a bare consonant therefore needs a way to say “no vowel here.” Malayalam gives a handful of consonants a special end-of-word shape called a **chillu**, and ശ is the chillu of the retroflex *ḷ*.

Writing: ശ — copy what you see

Put your pen on ശ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ശ in the ones that have it

നിങ്ങൾ · നീ · ശ

- *Trace it:* ശ three times, saying *ḷ* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ശ once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ശ? What sound does it carry? (*ḷ*.) What does a chillu tell you about the vowel? (That there isn't one.)

2.14 എന്ത് (entŭ) — “what”

The last piece of the question: “what.”

The letters in this word

(Skim if you read Malayalam.) എ (e) + the conjunct ന്ത് (ntŭ) → entŭ.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

എന്ത് (entŭ, “what”) is native Dravidian, on the interrogative stem *yā-/*e- — the same Dravidian question-root as Tamil *enna* and Telugu *ēmiti*, heading Malayalam’s question family: *entŭ* (what), *ār* (who), *evite* (where).

Your turn

- Say it: “entŭ”
- Say it: the question family — entŭ, ār, evite
- Recall: say *enre*, then read ആണ്

Before you move on

What Dravidian stem heads എന്ത്? (*yā-/*e-, same as Tamil *enna*, Telugu *ēmiti*.)

2.15 നിന്റെ പേര് എന്താണ്? (ninre pēr entāṇŭ?) — “what’s your name?”

Assemble the question — your + name + what-is. And notice the copula hiding in the last word.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

- നിന്റെ (*ninre*, “your”) = the possessive of *nī* (“you”).
- എന്താണ് (*entāṇŭ*) = entŭ (what) + āṇŭ (is), fused into one.

നിന്റെ പേര് എന്താണ്? = literally “your name what is?”

Unlike the Tamil question (which had **no** verb), Malayalam carries its copula *āṇṁ* right inside the question-word *entāṇṁ*.

Grammar Lens: answer, and the respectful version

Answer with the sentence you built: **Enre pēr Arun āṇṁ**. The respectful “your” is *ninnāḷuṭe*: *ninnāḷuṭe pēr entāṇṁ*?

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “*ninre pēr entāṇṁ*?”
- hear the copula inside — *entṁ* + *āṇṁ* → *entāṇṁ*

Before you move on

What two words fuse into എന്താണ്, and how does this differ from the Tamil question? (*entṁ* “what” + *āṇṁ* “is”; Tamil’s question has no verb, Malayalam’s carries the copula.)

2.16 സന്തോഷം (*santōṣam*) — “joy,” and “pleased to meet you”

The warm close — a Sanskrit word even in native-loving Malayalam.

The exchange — the words you can use

സന്തോഷം (*santōṣam*) literally means “joy.” At the end of a short introduction, it can stand by itself for “pleased to meet you.” A fuller phrase exists, but it needs words and grammar you have not learned yet; the one-word version is complete and useful now.

Script: two new shapes to notice

Keep സന്തോഷം visible. Most of its shapes have already appeared in this chapter. Point to just two new ones:

- ണ carries the *ṣa* sound near the end.
- ൊ is the long *ō* vowel sign attached to the consonant before it.

Look, point, and say the whole word once. The next two-minute lesson will let your hand copy it with the model still present.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

സന്തോഷം (*santōṣam*, “joy”) is **Sanskrit** — the same loan Kannada and Telugu use. So even Malayalam, the great keeper of native words (recall *nandi* for “thanks” in Chapter 1), reaches for Sanskrit here. The loanwords spread **selectively**, word by word — which is exactly what these cognate notes trace: native for “name” and “thanks,” Sanskrit for “pleased.”

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “santōṣam”
- the pattern — Malayalam keeps native *nandi* (thanks) but borrows Sanskrit *santōṣam* (pleased)

Before you move on

Is സന്തോഷം native or Sanskrit, and what does that show about how Malayalam borrows? (Sanskrit; it borrows *selectively* — native for some words, Sanskrit for others.)

2.17 ് — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ശ — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has not been on a page yet: it arrives with the word on the next one.

Script you'll notice: ു

ു — *u*.

It is a **vowel sign**. It is not a letter and never stands alone: it attaches to a consonant and **replaces** the *a* built into it with *u*. Replaces, not adds — the *a* is gone.

The dialogue on the next page introduces two people by name, and one of the names carries this sign.

- അരുൺ *arun* — a common man's name in Kerala

The sign hangs under its consonant and replaces that consonant's built-in *a* with *u*: ര *ra* → രു *ru*.

Writing: ു — **copy what you see**

Put your pen on ു and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ു in the ones that have it

അരുൺ · ര · ു

- *Trace it:* ു three times, saying *u* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ു once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ു? What sound does it carry? (*u*.)
Name one word you already say that contains it.

2.18 ണ് — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ണ — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has not been on a page yet: it arrives with the word on the next one.

Script you'll notice: ണ്

ണ — *ṇ*.

It is a **chillu** — a consonant with its vowel stripped away and given a shape of its own, so that it can end a word without a dangling mark.

The same name ends with one, and it is the second chillu you have met.

- അരുൺ *aruṇ* — the name you are about to read
- നിങ്ങൾ *ninṇaḷ* — you, respectful, ending in ണ്

ണ is ണ — the *ṇa* you read two pages ago — with its *a* handed back and an end-of-word shape of its own. Hold ണ and ണ് side by side.

Writing: ണ് — one unbroken line

Put your pen at the inner-left tip. Sweep clockwise around the small inner loop, then keep going around the broad bowl on the left. Climb to the upper junction, drop down the first middle stem, retrace upward, cross the middle arch, and drop the second stem. Carry the shoulder right, circle the right loop clockwise, then rise into the hook above the line and curl left.

Do not lift the pen. The whole character is one connected journey: inner loop, outer bowl, two middle stems, right loop, finishing hook.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ണ് in the ones that have it

അരുൺ · നിങ്ങൾ · ണ

- *Trace it:* ണ് three times in one unbroken line, saying *ṇ* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ണ് once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ഞ? What sound does it carry? (ൺ.)
Name one word you already say that contains it.

2.19 സന്തോഷം — copy one known word with help

Point to സന്തോഷം and say *santōṣam* once. Keep the model on the page. Find ഞ near the end, then find the long *ō* sign ഓ on the consonant before it. Those are the two shapes you will work with.

Script — notice before moving

Look at ഞ and ഓ without writing. Say *ṣa* and *ō*. The first action is observe and trace: your finger follows a visible model, so memory is not yet doing the work.

Writing — trace two visible shapes

Trace ഞ once and ഓ once with your finger while both models remain visible. Stop after those two shapes. The next action is a guided copy: the whole word stays in view while your hand makes its own copy.

Writing — one guided copy

Follow സന്തോഷം from left to right with your finger. Then copy the whole word once directly below the visible model. Look back as often as you need.

This is shape familiarity, not a stroke-order test. Write large and slowly. Do not hide the model, do not spell from memory, and do not add a second word.

Before you move on

Compare your copy with സന്തോഷം while both remain visible. Check only the two shapes you noticed: ഞ and ഓ. Repair one shape if you want, then stop and say *santōṣam* once more.

2.20 Chapter 2 — the introduction, whole

No new words. The whole introduction, in the order two people actually say it.

The exchange

Malayalam	English
എന്റെ പേര് മീരാ ആണ്. (<i>enre pēr Mira āṇṁ</i>)	My name is Mira.
നിന്റെ പേര് എന്താണ്? (<i>ninre pēr entāṇṁ</i>)	What's your name?
എന്റെ പേര് അരുൺ ആണ്. (<i>enre pēr Arun āṇṁ</i>)	My name is Arun.
സന്തോഷം. (<i>santōṣam</i>)	Pleased to meet you.

Every atom traced:

- **pēr** ← Dravidian **pēr* (*not name*; twin of Tamil *peyar*)
- **enre** — the native Dravidian possessive “my”
- **āṇṁ** ← the verb *āka* (“to be”) — Malayalam’s **copula**
- **entṁ** ← Dravidian question-stem **yā-/e-*
- **santōṣam** ← **Sanskrit** (borrowed even in native-loving Malayalam)

The Malayalam standout: unlike its Dravidian sisters’ **zero copula**, Malayalam **has a word for “is”** (*āṇṁ*) — a real grammatical difference between the closest of sisters.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- the whole exchange, both voices
- your own introduction — “*enre pēr ... āṇṁ*”
- ask it back — “*ninre pēr entāṇṁ?*”

Writing check — keep the model visible

Keep the dialogue table open. Copy സന്തോഷം once from its visible row, then compare your two new shapes, ഷ and ൃ, with the model. This is supported checkpoint writing, not spelling from memory.

Script check — the letters of this chapter

Cover the romanizations. Find each letter once in the Malayalam above, then say the word it sits in.

- പേര് — പ *pa*, ൃ *ē*
- എന്റെ — എ *e*, റ *ra*
- ആണ് — ആ *ā*, ണ *ṇa*
- നിങ്ങൾ — ീ *ī* (in നീ), ൊ *ḷ*
- അരുൺ — ു *u*, ണ *ṇ*
- *Look:* at each letter, then find it in the word beside it

Before you move on

Give your name, ask someone else's, say you're pleased. (*Enre pēr ... āṇṁ. / Ninre pēr entāṇṁ? / Santōṣam.*) What grammatical word does Malayalam have that Tamil, Kannada, and Telugu lack? (A copula — *āṇṁ*, “is.”)

Next chapter begins the responding cycle, one short question and answer at a time.

Chapter 3

How Are You?

Modes: 👁 eyes (6) ✍ pen (4) 🗣 Hands-free start: first 1 of 10 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can ask how someone is in Malayalam, answer naturally, and return the question.

Complete ML-C03-practice, the canonical closing checkpoint, and demonstrate the chapter promise: ask how someone is in Malayalam, answer naturally, and return the question.

3.1 എങ്ങനെ (eṇṇane) — “how,” another of the e- questions

You met എന്ത് (eṇṭ, “what”) in Chapter 2. Here is its sibling in Malayalam’s question family.

The letters in this word

(Skim if you read Malayalam.) എ (independent e) + ണ (ṇṇa, a doubled velar nasal) + നെ (ne) → എങ്ങനെ (eṇṇane).

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

എങ്ങനെ (eṇṇane, “how”) is native Dravidian, on the interrogative base e- you met in eṇṭ. Malayalam gathers its questions here: eṇṭ (what), eṇṇane (how), āṛ (who), eviṭe (where), eppōḷ (when), eṇṭin (why). It is the same Dravidian question-root heading Tamil’s eppaḍi — the deepest, most native layer of a language otherwise rich in Sanskrit.

Your turn

- *Say it:* “eṇṇane”
- *Say it:* the e- question family — *entŭ, eṇṇane, ārŭ, eviṭe, eppōḷ*
- *Recall:* say *nī* / *ninnal*

Before you move on

What base do Malayalam’s question-words share, and which Tamil cousin heads its own? (The interrogative *e-*; Tamil’s *eppadi*.)

3.2 ഒ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ഏ — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has been sitting in front of you on pages you have already read.

Script you’ll notice: ഒ

ഒ — *ō*.

It is an **independent vowel** — the shape this vowel takes when a word *begins* with it, rather than the sign it becomes inside a word.

You copied its other half in the last chapter. Inside സന്തോഷം the vowel *ō* is a **sign** wrapped around its consonant: ണോ. Where the vowel has no consonant to wrap around, it stands up as a letter of its own: ഒ.

- സന്തോഷം *santōṣam* — the sign form, already in your hand
- ഒ — the letter form, which arrives on the next page as the ending that turns a Malayalam statement into a question

Writing: ഒ — copy what you see

Put your pen on ഒ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ഓ in the ones that have it
- സന്തോഷം · ഓ · ൊ
- *Trace it:* ഓ three times, saying *ō* as you finish each one
 - *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ഓ once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ഓ? What sound does it carry? (*ō*.) Sign or letter — which does a word use when there is a consonant to hang it on? (The sign, ൊ.)

3.3 സുഖമാണോ? (sukhamāṇō?) — “how are you?”

Malayalam usually asks after your health rather than “how are you” — and the question is built from a Chapter-2 word plus a single new sound.

The letters in this word

സുഖം (*sukham*, “well-being”) + ആണ് (*āṇ*, “is,” from Chapter 2) + the question-marker ഓ (*ō*) → സുഖമാണോ (*sukhamāṇō*), “is [it] well?”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

സുഖമാണോ? literally means “**is [it] well?**” — where English says “how are you?”, Malayalam more often says “are you well?” The word സുഖം (*sukham*, “well-being, comfort, ease”) is a **Sanskrit** loan — *sukha* itself, borrowed whole (the *su-* “good” that is Greek *eu-*). Onto

it, Malayalam adds its own **native copula** *āṇṣ* (“is,” from Chapter 2) and the question particle **-ō** — a whole yes/no question made by one small sound at the end. This mix — a Sanskrit noun, a Dravidian verb — is Malayalam in miniature.

Grammar Lens: turning a statement into a question

Malayalam makes a yes/no question by adding **-ō** to the end: *sukhami āṇṣ* (“it is well”) → *sukhami āṇō?* (“is it well?”). No change of word order, no helper — just the little **-ō**. You will use it to question any statement.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “*sukhamāṇō?*”
- the Sanskrit word for well-being inside it (*sukha*)
- how Malayalam makes a yes/no question (add **-ō**)

Before you move on

What does *sukhamāṇō?* literally ask, and what are its Sanskrit and Dravidian pieces? (“Is [it] well?”; Sanskrit *sukha* “well-being” + the native copula *āṇṣ* + the question **-ō**.)

3.4 െ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: െ — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has been sitting in front of you on pages you have already read.

Script you’ll notice: െ

െ — *e*.

It is a **vowel sign**. It is not a letter and never stands alone: it attaches to a consonant and **replaces** the *a* built into it with *e*. Replaces, not adds — the *a* is gone.

You have been reading this one since the first chapter without being told its name.

- അതെ *athe* — yes
- എന്റെ *enre* — my

It is the short partner of േ, the long sign in പേര്. Both stand to the LEFT of the consonant they belong to and are pronounced AFTER it, so in അതെ the hook belongs to the ത on its right: *ta* → *te*.

Writing: െ — copy what you see

Put your pen on െ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find െ in the ones that have it

അതെ · എന്റെ · പേര്

- *Trace it:* െ three times, saying *e* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find െ once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — െ? What sound does it carry? (*e*)
Name one word you already say that contains it.

3.5 ഞാൻ (*ñān*) — “I,” the Dravidian first person

To answer, you first need “I” — and it opens with a sound English never starts a word with.

The letters in this word

ഞ (*ñā* — a palatal nasal, like the “ny” in *canyon*, but at the very start of the word) + ാ (long *ā*) + ൺ (the special word-final *n*, called *chillū*) → ഞാൻ (*ñān*).

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

ഞാൻ (*ñān*, “I”) ← Proto-Dravidian **yān* / **ñān* — native, and (unlike Hindi’s *maimi*, cousin of English *me*) **not** related to the European “I/me” family. Its possessive is the എന്റെ (*enre*, “my”) you already met: *ñān* “I,” *enre* “my.” Malayalam layered a great deal of Sanskrit over its vocabulary, but the pronoun for “I” is bedrock Dravidian.

Grammar Lens: Malayalam does *not* drop “I”

Here Malayalam parts from its sisters. Tamil, Kannada, and Telugu verbs carry the person in their ending, so they freely drop “I.” But **Malayalam verbs do not change for person at all** (you’ll see this in Chapter 5) — so the pronoun *ñān* must be said. It cannot be left out, because the verb won’t tell you who acts.

Your turn

- *Say it*: “ñān” — start with the “ny” sound
- *Say it*: the pair — *ñān* (I), *enre* (my)
- *Say it*: can Malayalam drop “I” like Tamil? (No — its verbs don’t mark person)
- *Recall*: read എന്ന്

Before you move on

What is *ñān*’s possessive, and why must Malayalam say “I” where Tamil can drop it? (*Enre*, “my”; Malayalam verbs don’t change for person, so the pronoun is needed.)

3.6 സുഖം (sukhami) — “well-being,” and how to answer

The word at the heart of “how are you?” — and it travelled all the way from Sanskrit.

The letters in this word

സു (*su*) + ഖം (*khami*, an aspirated *kh* + the *anuvāra*) → സുഖം (*sukhami*).

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

സുഖം (*sukhami*, “well-being, comfort, ease, happiness”) is a **Sanskrit** loan — *sukha* = *su-* (“good, well”) + *kha* (“space, feeling”) — the same *su-* that is Greek *eu-* (as in *euphoria*). Malayalam, Tamil’s closest sister, took far more Sanskrit into everyday speech than Tamil did — and *sukhami* is a perfect case: for “well,” where Tamil answers with native *nalam*, Malayalam reaches for Sanskrit *sukhami*.

The exchange — the reply

With the copula from Chapter 2: സുഖമാണ് (*sukhamāṇṁ*) — “[I am] well” (literally “[it] is well”). The whole exchange:

— *sukhamāṇō?* (“Are you well? / How are you?”) —
sukhamāṇṁ, nandī. (“I’m well, thank you.”)

Notice the reply reuses the greeting’s own words — *sukhami* + *āṇṁ* — just without the question *-ō*.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “sukhami”

- the full reply — *sukhamāṇṁ*, *nandi*
- the Sanskrit root and its Greek twin (*su-* = Greek *eu-*)

Before you move on

Give the reply to *sukhamāṇṁ*?, and say where *sukham* comes from. (*Sukhamāṇṁ*; Sanskrit *sukha*, “well-being” — the *su-* that is Greek *eu-*.)

3.7 ഇ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ഐ — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has been sitting in front of you on pages you have already read.

Script you’ll notice: ഇ

ഇ — *i*.

It is an **independent vowel** — the shape this vowel takes when a word *begins* with it, rather than the sign it becomes inside a word.

You have said a word that starts with it since your very first chapter.

- ഇല്ല *illa* — no, there isn’t

Its sign form is the small hook riding on the end of നന്ദി and ശരി. Inside a word, a sign; at the front of a word, the letter ഇ.

Writing: ഇ — copy what you see

Put your pen on ഇ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ഇ in the ones that have it
ഇല്ല · നന്ദി · ശരി
- *Trace it:* ഇ three times, saying *i* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ഇ once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ഇ? What sound does it carry? (*i*)
Name one word you already say that contains it.

3.8 സാരമില്ല (sāramilla) — “it doesn’t matter”

When someone thanks you — or apologises — this is the easy, gracious reply, and it fuses Malayalam’s two heritages in one word.

The letters in this word

സാരം (*sārami*, “substance, matter”) + ഇല്ല (*illa*, “is not”) → സാരമില്ല (*sāramilla*).

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

സാരമില്ല means “there’s no matter to it / it doesn’t matter” — used for “never mind / no worries / you’re welcome.” It is a perfect little emblem of Malayalam: സാരം (*sārami*, “substance, essence”) is a **Sanskrit** loan, while ഇല്ല (*illa*, “is not”) is the **native Dravidian** negative from Chapter 1. Sanskrit noun, Dravidian verb, welded into one everyday word. That *illa* is the same “is-not” shared across **Malayalam, Tamil, and Kannada** — one of the deep bonds of the south (Telugu alone diverges, to *lēdu*).

Grammar Lens: ഇല്ല, the all-purpose “no”

Illa negates existence and stands alone as “no”: *paṇam illa* (“there’s no money”), *ñān illa* (“it’s not me / I’m not [there]”). It is the negative twin of the copula *āṇṁ* (“is”) you learned in Chapter 2 — *āṇṁ*

affirms, *illa* denies.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “sāramilla”
- its two heritages (Sanskrit *sārami* + native *illa*)
- the *āṇṣ* / *illa* pair — “is” and “is-not”

Before you move on

What does *sāramilla* literally say, and which of its two words is Sanskrit? (“There’s no matter / it doesn’t matter”; *sārami* “substance” is Sanskrit, *illa* “not” is native Dravidian.)

3.9 Chapter 3 — The how-are-you exchange

No new words. The whole responding cycle, from atoms you now own.

The exchange

Say these aloud:

- “Are you well? / How are you?” — *sukhamāṇō?*
- “I’m well, thank you.” — *sukhamāṇṣ*, *nandi*.
- “It doesn’t matter / you’re welcome.” — *sāramilla*.

Your turn — the atoms

Say these aloud:

- the e- question-word for “how” (*eṇṇane*)
- “I” — and why Malayalam can’t drop it (*ṇān*; its verbs don’t mark person)
- the “is / is-not” pair (*āṇṣ* / *illa*)

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

- *eṇṇane* ← the interrogative *e-* (native Dravidian, like Tamil *eppaḍi*)
- *ñān* ← Proto-Dravidian (unrelated to English *me*); possessive *enre*
- *sukhani* ← **Sanskrit** *sukha* “well-being” (the *su-* that is Greek *eu-*)
- *āṇṭ* / *illa* — “is” and “is-not”; *illa* shared with Tamil & Kannada
- the question-marker *-ō* — turns any statement into a yes/no question

Script check — the letters of this chapter

Cover the romanizations. Find each letter once in the Malayalam above, then say the word it sits in.

- ആണോ? — ഓ *ō*, the question ending, standing as its own letter
- അതെ, എന്റെ — െ *e*
- ഇല്ല — ഇ *i*
- *Look:* at each letter, then find it in the word beside it

Before you move on

A friend asks *sukhamāṇō?* — give a full, polite reply, and answer their thanks. (*Sukhamāṇṭ*, *nandī* — and to thanks, *sāramilla*.)

3.10 സന്തോഷം — one delayed copy

Look at സന്തോഷം for five seconds and say *santōṣam*. Find ഷ and the long *ō* sign ഓ once more. Then cover the model with your hand or a small piece of paper.

Writing — one try after a delay

Write സന്തോഷം once while the model is covered. This is a gentle retrieval, not a speed test. If one shape will not come, uncover the model, look, cover it again, and finish.

Before you move on

Uncover സന്തോഷം and compare it with your copy. Repair only one shape if needed. Say *santōṣam* once, then stop: one known word, one spaced writing revisit.

Chapter 4

Farewells

Modes: 👁 eyes (5) ✍ pen (3) 🗣 Hands-free start: none of the 8 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can end a Malayalam conversation politely and choose a farewell that fits the situation.

Complete ML-C04-practice, the canonical closing checkpoint, and demonstrate the chapter promise: end a Malayalam conversation politely and choose a farewell that fits the situation.

4.1 ഓ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ഓ — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has not been on a page yet: it arrives with the word on the next one.

Script you'll notice: ഓ

ഓ — *va*.

It is a **consonant**, and in this script a consonant is never bare: it comes with an *a* already in it. So it is not *v*, it is **va**.

This chapter's farewells are built on a verb that starts with it, and the verb itself arrives on the next page.

- വരിക *varika* — to come

Every farewell this chapter is heading for is built on it, so the shape is worth having in hand first.

Writing: റ — copy what you see

Put your pen on റ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find റ in the ones that have it

വരിക · റ · ശരി

- *Trace it:* റ three times, saying *va* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find റ once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — റ? What sound does it carry? (*va*.)
Name one word you already say that contains it.

4.2 ഉ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: റ — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has not been on a page yet: it arrives with the word on the next one.

Script you'll notice: ഉ

ഉ — *u*.

It is an **independent vowel** — the shape this vowel takes when a word *begins* with it, rather than the sign it becomes inside a word.

Every Malayalam verb you are about to meet ends in the same two letters, ഉക *-uka*, and this is the first of them.

- ഉക *-uka* — the ending that makes a Malayalam verb’s dictionary form

You already read its sign form, ു, in the name അരുൺ. Where the vowel opens a syllable instead of riding on a consonant, it needs the full letter ഉ.

Writing: ഉ — copy what you see

Put your pen on ഉ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ഉ in the ones that have it
ഉക · അരുൺ · ഉ
- *Trace it:* ഉ three times, saying *u* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ഉ once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ഉ? What sound does it carry? (*u*.) Name one word you already say that contains it.

4.3 പോകുക (pōkuka) — “to go,” and വരിക (to come)

Two everyday verbs — and together they make the Malayalam goodbye.

The letters in this word

പോ (pō, pa + long-ō sign) + കുക (kuka, the dictionary “-uka” ending) → പോകുക (pōkuka). Its partner: വരിക (varika, “to come”).

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

പോകുക (pōkuka, “to go”) and വരിക (varika, “to come”) are native Dravidian verbs. Notice the ending -ക (-uka) — this is how Malayalam names a verb in the dictionary, its “to _____” form (where Tamil uses a bare stem). Malayalam, like all its family, does not say a plain “goodbye”: it says “I go, and I **come back**.”

Your turn

- *Say it*: “pōkuka” (to go) and “varika” (to come)
- *Say it*: the “to _____” ending every Malayalam verb takes (-uka)
- *Recall*: say *ennane*, then say *ñān*, then say *sukham*

Before you move on

What ending marks a Malayalam infinitive, and why do you need both “go” and “come” to say goodbye? (-uka; the farewell is “I’ll go and come back.”)

4.4 ു — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ഉ — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has not been on a page yet: it arrives with the word on the next one.

Script you’ll notice: ു

ു — *ū*.

It is a **vowel sign**. It is not a letter and never stands alone: it attaches to a consonant and **replaces** the *a* built into it with *ū*. Replaces, not adds — the *a* is gone.

- വരു *varū* — “come!”, the short command you meet on the next page

It is the long partner of ു, the sign you read in അരുൺ. Same place under the consonant, same vowel, held longer — and the shape grows a second loop to say so.

Writing: ു — copy what you see

Put your pen on ു and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ു in the ones that have it

വരു · അരുൺ · ു

- *Trace it:* ു three times, saying *ū* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ു once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ു? What sound does it carry? (*ū*.)
Which of the two is longer — ു or ു? (ു.)

4.5 പോയി വരാം (pōyi varām) — “I’ll go and come back”

The everyday Malayalam goodbye — a promise, not a parting.

The letters in this word

പോയി (*pōyi*, “having gone”) is *pō* + the “-yi” that means “having ...d.”
 വരാം (*varām*, “[I] will come”) is *va* + the -ആം (-*āmi*) ending, “I/we will / let me.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

പോയി വരാം = പോയി (*pōyi*, “having gone”) + വരാം (*varām*, “I’ll come”) — literally “**having gone, I’ll come [back]**,” i.e. “I’ll go and come back.” A Malayali never signs off with a bare “I’m leaving.” It is the same “go-and-come-back” farewell across the Dravidian south (Tamil *pōy varugirēn*, Kannada *hōgi baruttēne*, Telugu *velli vastānu*). The warm reply is പോയി വരു (*pōyi varū*, “go and come [back]”). It reaches past Dravidian, too: Bengali, an Indo-Aryan language with no shared ancestor for these words, says goodbye with *āshi* — “I come.” The whole south, and beyond, prefers a promise of return to a blunt farewell.

Grammar Lens: the -ആം ending, “let me / I will”

-ആം (-*āmi*) added to a verb stem means “I/we will” or “let me” — a soft, volitional future: *varām* (“I’ll come”), *kāṇām* (“let’s see,” coming next lesson), *ceyyām* (“I’ll do it”). It is Malayalam’s gentle way of promising an action.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- the goodbye — *pōyi varām*
- its literal meaning (“having gone, I’ll come” → “I’ll come back”)
- the warm reply — *pōyi varū*

Before you move on

What does the Malayalam goodbye literally promise, and what does the -*āmi* ending add? (“I’ll go and come back”; -*āmi* = “I will / let me.”)

4.6 നാളെ കാണാം (nāḷe kāṇāṁ) — “see you tomorrow”

A goodbye with a date on it — and the *-āṁ* ending you just met.

The letters in this word

നാളെ (*nāḷe*): നാ (*nā*) + ളെ (*le*, with the retroflex ള *ḷ*). കാണാം (*kāṇāṁ*) = കാṇ (*“see”*) + the -ആം (*-āṁ*) ending, “let’s.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

നാളെ (*nāḷe*, “tomorrow”) is native Dravidian, from നാൾ (*nāl*, “day”) — the very same *nāl* behind Tamil’s *nālai* and Kannada’s *nāḷe*. കാണാം (*kāṇāṁ*, “let’s see”) is from കാണുക (*kāṇuka*, “to see”) + *-āṁ* — so the phrase is “**tomorrow, let’s see [each other].**” One family, one word for “day,” one habit of parting until the next.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “nāḷe kāṇāṁ”
- the word for “day” inside “tomorrow” (*nāl*, shared with Tamil & Kannada)
- the verb “to see” (*kāṇ*)

Before you move on

What are the two pieces of *nāḷe kāṇāṁ*, and what Dravidian sisters share the “day” root? (*Nāḷe* “tomorrow” + *kāṇ* “see”; Tamil *nālai*, Kannada *nāḷe* — all from *nāl*.)

4.7 വീണ്ടും കാണാം (vīṇḍum kāṇāṁ) — “we’ll meet again”

The open-ended, warm goodbye — no date, just a promise.

The letters in this word

വീണ്ടും (*vīṇḍum*): note the retroflex cluster ണ്ട (*ṇḍ*) and the final *anusvāra*.
കാണാം (*kāṇāmi*, “let’s see”) you just learned.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

വീണ്ടും കാണാം = വീണ്ടും (*vīṇḍum*, “again”) + കാണാം (*kāṇāmi*, “let’s see”) — “we’ll see [each other] again.” Both words are native Dravidian: *vīṇḍum* (“again,” from *vīṇṭu*, “to return”) and *kāṇ* (“to see”). Where Tamil’s “we’ll meet again” reaches for the Sanskrit loan *sandi* to say “meet,” Malayalam — like Kannada — keeps its own native verb, here “to see.”

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “vīṇḍum kāṇāmi”
- “again” and “let’s see” (*vīṇḍum*, *kāṇāmi*)

Before you move on

What does the phrase mean, and which native verb does Malayalam use instead of Tamil’s Sanskrit *sandi*? (“We’ll see [each other] again”; *kāṇ*, “to see.”)

4.8 Chapter 4 — The farewells

No new words. Three ways to part — none of them a blunt “goodbye.”

The exchange — the farewells

Say these aloud:

- the everyday goodbye — *pōyi varāmi* (“I’ll go and come back”)
- the warm reply — *pōyi varū* (“go and come back”)
- “see you tomorrow” — *nāle kāṇāmi*
- “we’ll meet again” — *vīṇḍum kāṇāmi*

Your turn — the atoms

Say these aloud:

- the two verbs and their “-uka” form (*pōkuka* go, *varika* come)
- “day” inside “tomorrow” (*nāl*), “again” (*vīṇḍuni*), “to see” (*kāṇ*)
- the *-āmi* ending — “I will / let’s”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

- *pōyi varāmi* — “having gone, I’ll come”; the Dravidian promise-of-return goodbye
- *nāle* ← *nāl* “day” (shared with Tamil & Kannada); *kāṇ* “to see”
- *vīṇḍuni* “again” — where Tamil borrowed Sanskrit *sandi*, Malayalam kept *kāṇ*

Script check — the letters of this chapter

Cover the romanizations. Find each letter once in the Malayalam above, then say the word it sits in.

- വരിക — വ *va*
- പോകുക — ഉ *u*, the vowel inside the ending ഉക
- വരു — ു *ū*
- *Look*: at each letter, then find it in the word beside it

Before you move on

Why does Malayalam never say a plain “I’m leaving,” and what does its everyday goodbye promise instead? (It sounds too final; *pōyi varāmi* promises “I’ll go and come back.”)

Chapter 5

The First Verbs

Modes: 👁 eyes (5) ✍ pen (9) 🔄 Hands-free start: first 1 of 14 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can build short present-tense Malayalam sentences with the chapter’s first verbs.

Complete ML-C05-practice, the canonical closing checkpoint, and demonstrate the chapter promise: build short present-tense Malayalam sentences with the chapter’s first verbs.

5.1 സംസാരിക്കുക (saṁsārikkuka) — “to speak,” your first full verb

So far, “to be.” Here is a verb that *does* something — and it reveals the single strangest, simplest thing about Malayalam grammar.

The letters in this word

സം (saṁ) + സാ (sā) + രി (ri) + ക്കുക (kkuka, doubled *kk* + the *-uka* infinitive) → സംസാരിക്കുക (saṁsārikkuka).

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

സംസാരിക്കുക (saṁsārikkuka, “to speak, to converse”) is Sanskrit-derived (from *saṁsāra*, “flowing together, intercourse”) — one more sign of Malayalam’s deep Sanskrit layer, alongside its native *parayuka* (“to say”). To say “I speak,” Malayalam adds the present ending -ഉന്നു (-unnu) to the stem:

saṁsārikk- (speak) + *-unnu* (present) → സംസാരിക്കുന്നു
(*saṁsārikkunnu*), “speak / am speaking.”

Grammar Lens: the verb never changes for person

Here is Malayalam’s great surprise. In Tamil, Telugu, and Kannada the verb changes ending for *who* acts (*pēsugirēn* “I speak,” *pēsugirān* “he speaks”). **Malayalam does not.** The verb is the **same** for everyone:

- *ñān saṁsārikkunnu* — “I speak”
- *nī saṁsārikkunnu* — “you speak”
- *avan saṁsārikkunnu* — “he speaks”

One form, all persons. Malayalam threw away person-agreement entirely — which is exactly why (Chapter 3) it can never drop the pronoun: the verb won’t tell you who. Of all its Dravidian sisters, Malayalam went the furthest here.

Your turn

- *Say it*: “saṁsārikkuka” (to speak)
- *Say it*: “I speak” — *ñān saṁsārikkunnu*
- *Say it*: “he speaks” — *avan saṁsārikkunnu* (the same verb!)
- *Recall*: say *pōkuka*

Before you move on

How does the Malayalam verb change between “I speak” and “he speaks,” and what does that force you to keep? (It does **not** change — one form for all persons; so the pronoun must always be said.)

5.2 ഞ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ഞ — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has been sitting in front of you on pages you have already read.

Script you'll notice: ഞ

ഞ — *ñā*.

It is a **consonant**, and in this script a consonant is never bare: it comes with an *a* already in it. So it is not *ñ*, it is **ñā**.

You have said the word for “I” since the how-are-you chapter, and it starts with this letter.

- ഞാൻ *ñān* — I

It is one sound, not two: the *ny* of “canyon,” made in one movement.

Writing: ഞ — copy what you see

Put your pen on ഞ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ഞ in the ones that have it

ഞാൻ · ഞ · നന്ദി

- *Trace it:* ഞ three times, saying *ñā* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ഞ once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ഞ? What sound does it carry? (*ñā*.)
Name one word you already say that contains it.

5.3 ന് — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ഞ — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has been sitting in front of you on pages you have already read.

Script you'll notice: ന്

ന് — *n*.

It is a **chillu** — a consonant with its vowel stripped away and given a shape of its own, so that it can end a word without a dangling mark.

The same word ends with a chillu — the third one you have met.

- ഞാൻ *ñān* — I
- നിങ്ങൾ *ninnāl* — you, respectful, ending in ൺ
- അരുൺ *arun* — the name, ending in ൺ

ന് is ന with its *a* handed back. Line the three up — ന് ന് ൺ — and say what each one used to be.

Writing: ന് — copy what you see

Put your pen on ന് and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ന് in the ones that have it
 ഞാൻ · അരുൺ · നിങ്ങൾ
- *Trace it:* ന് three times, saying *n* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ന് once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ഺ? What sound does it carry? (*n*.)
Name one word you already say that contains it.

5.4 യ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ഺ — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has been sitting in front of you on pages you have already read.

Script you'll notice: യ

യ — *ya*.

It is a **consonant**, and in this script a consonant is never bare: it comes with an *a* already in it. So it is not *y*, it is **ya**.

- പോയി വരാം *pōyi varāṁ* — goodbye, from the chapter behind you

Look at the middle of പോയി: യ carrying the small *i* hook.

Writing: യ — copy what you see

Put your pen on യ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- Look:* at these words, and find യ in the ones that have it

പോയി വരാം · യ · ഞാൻ

- *Trace it:* യ three times, saying *ya* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find യ once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — യ? What sound does it carry? (*ya.*)
Name one word you already say that contains it.

5.5 ഞാൻ മലയാളം സംസാരിക്കുന്നു (*ñān malayāḷam̐ saṁsārikkunnu*) — “I speak Malayalam”

Your first full, moving sentence — and the language names itself after a landscape.

The letters in this word

മലയാളം (*malayāḷam̐*): മ (*ma*) + ല (*la*) + യാ (*yā*) + ള (retroflex *ḷa*) + ാം (*m̐*).

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

ഞാൻ മലയാളം സംസാരിക്കുന്നു = ഞാൻ (*ñān*, “I”) + മലയാളം (*malayāḷam̐*, the object) + സംസാരിക്കുന്നു (*saṁsārikkunnu*, “speak”) — “I Malayalam speak,” the verb last. The name മലയാളം (*malayāḷam̐*) is native Dravidian: മല (*mala*, “mountain”) + ആളം (*āḷam̐*, “place, region”) — “**the mountain land**,” named for the Western Ghats along the coast where it is spoken. Its signature retroflex ള (*ḷ*) sits right in the middle of the word.

Grammar Lens: the pronoun stays

Because *saṁsārikkunnu* is the same for every person (Chapter 5’s big surprise), the pronoun ഞാൻ (*ñān*) cannot be dropped — it is the only thing marking “I.” Where Tamil would happily say just *pēsugirēn*, Malayalam must keep the *ñān*.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “*ñān malayāḷam saṁsārikkunnu*”
- what *malayāḷam* is built from (*mala* “mountain” + *āḷam* “place”)
- why *ñān* can’t be dropped (the verb doesn’t mark person)

Before you move on

Say “I speak Malayalam,” and give the meaning of the language’s name. (*Ñān malayāḷam saṁsārikkunnu*; “the mountain land,” *mala* + *āḷam*.)

5.6 ഌ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ഡ — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has not been on a page yet: it arrives with the word on the next one.

Script you’ll notice: ഌ

ഌ — *o*.

It is a **vowel sign**. It is not a letter and never stands alone: it attaches to a consonant and **replaces** the *a* built into it with *o*. Replaces, not adds — the *a* is gone.

- കൊച്ചി *kocci* — Kochi, the city that arrives on the next page

It is the short partner of ഡോ, the long *ō* sign you copied in സന്തോഷം. Both wrap around their consonant, one arm in front and one behind; the long one carries an extra upright stroke on the right.

Writing: ഌ — copy what you see

Put your pen on ഌ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here

until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ഓ in the ones that have it

കൊച്ചി · സന്തോഷം · ഓ

- *Trace it:* ഓ three times, saying *o* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ഓ once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ഓ? What sound does it carry? (*o*.)
Name one word you already say that contains it.

5.7 ച — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ഓ — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has not been on a page yet: it arrives with the word on the next one.

Script you'll notice: ച

ച — *ca*.

It is a **consonant**, and in this script a consonant is never bare: it comes with an *a* already in it. So it is not *c*, it is **ca**.

- കൊച്ചി *kocci* — Kochi, where it is doubled into ച്ച in the middle of the name

The sound is the *ch* of “church,” and doubling it holds it longer.

Writing: ച — copy what you see

Put your pen on ച and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ച in the ones that have it

കൊച്ചി · ച · ക

- *Trace it:* ച three times, saying *ca* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ച once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ച? What sound does it carry? (*ca*.)
Name one word you already say that contains it.

5.8 ഞ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ച — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has not been on a page yet: it arrives with the word on the next one.

Script you'll notice: ഞ

ഞ — *l*.

It is a **chillu** — a consonant with its vowel stripped away and given a shape of its own, so that it can end a word without a dangling mark.

The fourth chillu, and the one that does the most work in Malayalam grammar: it closes the little ending that says *where*.

- കൊച്ചിയിൽ *kocciyil* — in Kochi

ൽ is ല — the *la* doubled inside ഇല്ല — with its *a* handed back. That makes four end-of-word shapes you can now read: ന് ണ് ശ് ര്.

Writing: ര് — copy what you see

Put your pen on ര് and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ര് in the ones that have it
കൊച്ചിയിൽ · ഇല്ല · ര്
- *Trace it:* ര് three times, saying *l* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ര് once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ര്? What sound does it carry? (*l*)
Name one word you already say that contains it.

5.9 താമസിക്കുക (tāmasikkuka) — “to live, to stay”

A second verb, so you can say where you live — and again the Sanskrit layer shows.

The letters in this word

താ (*tā*) + മ (*ma*) + സി (*si*) + ക്കുക (*kkuka*, the *-uka* infinitive) → താമസിക്കുക (*tāmasikkuka*).

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

താമസിക്കുക (*tāmasikkuka*, “to live, to reside, to stay, to delay”) is Sanskrit-derived (from *tāmasa* / *tamas*, “dwelling, tarrying”). Malayalam often prefers such Sanskrit-built verbs where Tamil uses a native word (*vāl*). “I live in Kochi” is ഞാൻ കൊച്ചിയിൽ താമസിക്കുന്നു (*ñān kocciyil tāmasikkunnu*) — again the same *-unnu* present, the same for every person.

Grammar Lens: “in” comes after the noun

കൊച്ചിയിൽ (*kocciyil*) = *Kochi* + -ഇൽ (*-il*, “in”), glued to the **end** of the noun. Malayalam uses **postpositions** (case-suffixes) where English uses prepositions: “Kochi-in I live,” the verb last — and the pronoun kept.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “*tāmasikkuka*”
- “I live in Kochi” — *ñān kocciyil tāmasikkunnu*
- where “in” (*-il*) sits — glued to the end of the noun

Before you move on

What does *tāmasikkuka* mean, and where does “in” go? (“To live / stay / reside”; *-il* “in” attaches to the **end** of the noun.)

5.10 ഞ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ഞ — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has not been on a page yet: it arrives with the word on the next one.

Script you'll notice: ഹ

ഹ — *ha*.

It is a **consonant**, and in this script a consonant is never bare: it comes with an *a* already in it. So it is not *h*, it is **ha**.

The next page names a second verb beside the one it teaches — the verb for helping — and this letter sits in the middle of it, inside the noun that verb is built on.

- സഹായം *sahāyam* — help

It is a Sanskrit-layer word, which is where most of this letter's work is.

Writing: ഹ — copy what you see

Put your pen on ഹ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ഹ in the ones that have it

സഹായം · ഹ · നന്ദി

- *Trace it:* ഹ three times, saying *ha* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ഹ once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ഹ? What sound does it carry? (*ha*.)
Name one word you already say that contains it.

5.11 ജോലി ചെയ്യുക (jōli ceyyuka) — “to work”

The last verb of the chapter — and, like Hindi’s *karnā* and Tamil’s *sey*, it is a “do” verb that builds a hundred others.

The letters in this word

ജോലി (*jōli*, “work, job”): ജോ (*jō*) + ലി (*li*). ചെയ്യുക (*ceyyuka*, “do”): ചെ (*ce*) + യ്യ (doubled *yy*) + ക (*ka*).

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

ചെയ്യുക (*ceyyuka*, “to do, to make”) is core native Dravidian — the very same root as Tamil செய் (*sey*, “to do”). Malayalam — like Hindi with *karnā*, Tamil with *sey*, Telugu with *cēyu*, Kannada with *māḍu* — builds compound verbs by putting a noun in front of it:

- ജോലി ചെയ്യുക (*jōli ceyyuka*) = “work-do” = “to work” (*jōli*, “work”)
- സഹായിക്കുക (*sahāyikkuka*) = “to help” (Sanskrit *sahāya*)

So “I work” is ഞാൻ ജോലി ചെയ്യുന്നു (*ñān jōli ceyyunnu*) — same -*unnu* present, pronoun kept. *Ceyyuka* and Tamil’s *sey* are, at root, one word — the Dravidian “do” that these languages all lean on.

Grammar Lens: noun + ചെയ്യുക = a new verb

This “noun + *ceyyuka*” pattern is the twin of Hindi’s “noun + *karnā*,” Tamil’s “noun + *sey*,” Telugu’s “noun + *cēyu*,” and Kannada’s “noun + *māḍu*.” Five languages, two of them from an unrelated family, all landed on the same trick.

Your turn

- Say it: “jōli ceyyuka” (to work)
- Say it: “I work” — *ñān jōli ceyyunnu*
- Say it: the Tamil verb that is the same word as *ceyyuka* (*sey*)
- Recall: say *sahāyikkuka*

Before you move on

How does Malayalam turn “work” into “to work,” and which Tamil verb is its twin? (*Jōli* + *ceyyuka* = “work-do”; Tamil *sey* — the same Dravidian root.)

5.12 ജ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ഏ — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has been sitting in front of you on pages you have already read.

Script you’ll notice: ജ

ജ — *ja*.

It is a **consonant**, and in this script a consonant is never bare: it comes with an *a* already in it. So it is not *j*, it is **ja**.

You have already said a word that starts with it.

- ജോലി ചെയ്യുക *jōli ceyyuka* — to work (literally “work-do”)

Look at the first pair: ജ with the long ഞ wrapped around it — *jō*. Two shapes you now read separately, working together.

Writing: ജ — copy what you see

Put your pen on ജ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ജ in the ones that have it

ജോലി ചെയ്യുക · ജ · ോ

- *Trace it:* ജ three times, saying *ja* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ജ once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ജ? What sound does it carry? (*ja*.)
Name one word you already say that contains it.

5.13 ല — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ജ — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has been sitting in front of you on pages you have already read.

Script you'll notice: ല

ല — *la*.

It is a **consonant**, and in this script a consonant is never bare: it comes with an *a* already in it. So it is not *l*, it is **la**.

- ജോലി *jōli* — work, the word you said on the page before
- ഇല്ല *illa* — no, from the very first chapter, where it is doubled into ല്ല

You met its chillu, ൽ, a few pages ago. This is the same consonant with its *a* still on board.

Writing: ല — copy what you see

Put your pen on ല and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ല in the ones that have it
- ജോലി · ഇല്ല · രാ
- *Trace it:* ല three times, saying *la* as you finish each one
 - *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ല once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ല? What sound does it carry? (*la*.)
Name one word you already say that contains it.

5.14 Chapter 5 — The first verbs

No new words. Three verbs, one endlessly simple engine.

The exchange — build the sentences

Say these aloud:

- “I speak Malayalam” — *ñān malayālam samisārikkunnu*
- “I live in Kochi” — *ñān koccīyil tāmasikkunnu*
- “I work” — *ñān jōli ceyyunnu*
- “he speaks” — *avan samisārikkunnu* (the very same verb!)

Your turn — the engine

Say these aloud:

- the present ending on every verb (-*unnu*)
- the one thing Malayalam verbs do NOT do (change for person)
- what that forces you to always keep (the pronoun *ñān* etc.)

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

- *saṁsārikkuka* “to speak” (Sanskrit-derived; native twin *parayuka*)
- *tāmasikkuka* “to live” (Sanskrit-derived; where Tamil uses native *vāḷ*)
- *ceyyuka* “to do” → *jōli ceyyuka* “to work” — the *same root* as Tamil *sey*
- *malayāḷam* = *mala* “mountain” + *āḷam* “place” — “the mountain land”

Script check — the letters of this chapter

Cover the romanizations. Find each letter once in the Malayalam above, then say the word it sits in.

- ഞാൻ — ഞ *ñā*, ന് *n*
- പോയി — യ *ya*
- കൊച്ചിയിൽ — ഞ *o*, ച *ca*, ൾ *l*
- സഹായം — ഹ *ha*
- ജോലി — ജ *ja*, ല *la*
- *Look:* at each letter, then find it in the word beside it

Before you move on

In one breath, say your language, your city, and your work in Malayalam — and note what stays the same in every verb. (*Ñān malayāḷam saṁsārikkunnu. Ñān ... il tāmasikkunnu. Ñān jōli*

ceyyunnu — the verb never changes for person.)

Chapter 6

Case Endings and Dative Subjects

Modes: 👁 eyes (2) ✍ pen (2) 🖐 Hands-free start: none of the 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say that I know Malayalam the way Malayalam itself builds it – with no subject at all, marking myself with the dative -ikku.

Say enikku malayālam ariyām, set it against nān malayālam samisārikkunnu, and stack the dative’s four Dravidian cousins.

6.1 -ിക്കു (-ikkū) — “to, for”

Your first **case ending**. English puts “to” in **front** as its own word. Malayalam sticks it on the **back** — and that is the biggest structural fact about the language.

What to know first

word	+ dative	meaning
പേര് <i>pēr</i> — name	പേരിന് <i>pērinŭ</i>	to/for the name
ജോലി <i>jōli</i> — work	ജോലിക്കു <i>jōlikkū</i>	for work

Malayalam’s dative has two shapes — -ിക്കു *-ikkū* and -ിന് *-inŭ* — chosen by the sound the noun ends in. Same case, same job; the seam is still visible.

And with “I”, which reshapes first:

ഞാൻ *nān* (“I”) → എനിക്ക് *enikkū* (“to me”)

Learn *enikkū* cold — it opens a great many everyday Malayalam sentences, as the next lesson shows.

Why it's said this way

	Malayalam -ikkū	a Latin ending like -īs
pins down the case?	yes — dative, always	no — <i>-īs</i> is dative or ablative
carries number?	no — a separate suffix does	yes — plural, baked in
carries declension class?	no	yes — 1st/2nd only
can you see the seam?	yes : <i>jōli + kkū</i>	no — one fused lump

Malayalam **stacks**: each suffix means one thing and sits in a fixed order — so a long word can be read piece by piece. Latin **fuses**: *-īs* is case *and* plural *and* declension at once, indivisible, and it doesn't even settle *which* case. Malayalam's dative is never ambiguous. That's what “**agglutinative**” means, and why Malayalam words grow long without growing hard: they are **built**, not memorised.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “*pēr ... pērinū*”
- “*ñān ... enikkū*” — “I” ... “to me”
- “*jōlikkū*” — “for work,” from Ch. 5's ജോലി
- the principle — “one suffix, one meaning, visible seam”

Before you move on

What does **-ിക്കൂ** mean? (“**To**” or “**for**.”) Where does it go? (**On the end** of the noun.) What is “to me”? (**എനിക്കൂ** *enikkū*.) Why does the suffix have two shapes? (**-ikkū** and **-inū** are chosen by the noun's ending — one case, two forms.) How is that unlike a Latin ending? (Latin **fuses** case+number+declension — and *-īs* doesn't even fix *which* case; Malayalam's carries **one** meaning,

unambiguously, seam visible.) Next: the sentence where the person isn't the subject.

6.2 ക — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ല — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has been sitting in front of you on pages you have already read.

Script you'll notice: ക

ക — *ka*.

It is a **consonant**, and in this script a consonant is never bare: it comes with an *a* already in it. So it is not *k*, it is **ka**.

Highly rounded and loopy — full circles, hooks and curls, with almost no straight lines. You wrote this one in the first chapter, inside the greeting; here it is again, loose in the middle of four words you now say every day.

- നമസ്കാരം *namaskāram* — hello / greetings
- നാളെ കാണാം *nāḷe kāṇāṁ* — see you tomorrow
- താമസിക്കുക *tāmasikkuka* — to live, to stay
- ജോലി ചെയ്യുക *jōli ceyyuka* — to work

Writing: ക — copy what you see

Put your pen on ക and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ക in the ones that have it

നമസ്കാരം · നാളെ കാണാം · നന്ദി

- *Trace it:* ക three times, saying *ka* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ക once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ക? What sound does it carry? (*ka*.)
Name one word you already say that contains it.

6.3 ര — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ക — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has been sitting in front of you on pages you have already read.

Script you'll notice: ര

ര — *ra*.

It is a **consonant**, and in this script a consonant is never bare: it comes with an *a* already in it. So it is not *r*, it is **ra**.

The soft *r*, and the partner of the hard റ you read inside എന്റെ. You wrote this one in the first chapter too, at the end of the greeting.

- നമസ്കാരം *namaskāram* — hello / greetings
- ശരി *śari* — okay / alright / correct
- പേര് *pēr* — name
- സാരമില്ല *sāramilla* — it doesn't matter

Writing: ര — copy what you see

Put your pen on ര and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ര in the ones that have it

നമസ്കാരം · ശരി · എന്റെ

- *Trace it:* ര three times, saying *ra* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ര once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ര? What sound does it carry? (*ra*.)
Which of the two *r* letters is this — the soft ര or the hard റ? (The soft one.)

6.4 എനിക്ക് മലയാളം അറിയാം — “I know Malayalam”

Chapter 5 gave you ഞാൻ മലയാളം സംസാരിക്കുന്നു — “I speak Malayalam.” Now say “I **know** Malayalam.” Malayalam will not let you use *ñān*.

What to know first

എനിക്ക് മലയാളം അറിയാം. *enikkŭ malayāḷam ariyāṁ*. literally: “**to-me** Malayalam is-knowable.”

piece

എനിക്ക് <i>enikkŭ</i>	“to me” — the dative from the last lesson
മലയാളം <i>malayāḷam</i>	Malayalam (Ch. 5)
അറിയാം <i>ariyāṁ</i>	“can be known” — <i>ariy-</i> “know” + -ām , the <i>able-to</i> ending

You are not the subject. *Ñān* is gone; the person has been moved into the dative, and the sentence is now about the **language**. Malayalam isn’t saying you perform an act of knowing — it’s saying the language is knowable **to you**.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

Malayalam separates what you **do** from what **happens to** you. Speaking is an action, so Ch. 5 used *ñān*. But knowing, liking, wanting, being hungry — these **arrive** at you. Malayalam marks that by putting the person in the **dative**.

English frames it as	Malayalam frames it as
I know Malayalam	Malayalam is known to me
I like it	it is pleasing to me
I am cold	cold is to me

English preserves one fossil of exactly this: “**methinks**” — *me* is a dative, “it seems **to me**.” Malayalam made it the rule.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

language	“I know [the language]”	the dative
Malayalam	<i>enikkŭ malayāḷam</i> <i>ariyāṁ</i>	-ikkŭ
Tamil	<i>enakku tamīl teriyum</i>	-ukku
Telugu	<i>nāku telugu vaccu</i>	-ku
Kannada	<i>nanage kannada gottu</i>	-ge

Look at the first column: Malayalam’s *enikkŭ* and Tamil’s *enakku* are nearly the **same word** — the two languages separated most recently of the four, and it shows. One construction, four languages, four visibly related suffixes: the Dravidian family showing its bones, as *blanc/bianco/branco* did for Romance.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “*enikkũ malayāḷaṁ aṛiyāṁ*”
- the contrast — “*ñān malayāḷaṁ saṁsārikkunnu*” (I speak) ... “*enikkũ malayāḷaṁ aṛiyāṁ*” (known to me)
- the near-twins — “*enikkũ ... enakku*”
- the four cousins — “*-ikkũ · -ukku · -ku · -ge*”

Before you move on

What does എനിക്ക് മലയാളം അറിയാം literally say? (“**To-me** Malayalam **is-knowable**.”) What has English got that Malayalam hasn’t? (A nominative “**I**” — *ñān* is replaced by the dative *enikkũ*.) Why the dative? (Knowing **happens to** you.) Which Tamil word is *enikkũ* almost identical to, and why? (**Enakku** — Tamil and Malayalam split most recently of the four.) Which English word keeps the same idea? (**Methinks**.)

Chapter 7

Numbers One to Ten

Modes:  voice (2)  pen (14)  Hands-free start: first 1 of 16 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can hear, say, read, and write representative numbers from one to ten in Malayalam.

Count onnu to pathu, read the ten numeral shapes out of order, and write ezhu with its numeral from sound alone.

7.1 One to five — voice first

This lesson has no Malayalam writing to decode. Hear the five words, attach each one to a quantity, and say them before your eyes meet the script.

The letters in this word

quantity	said
1	<i>onnŭ</i>
2	<i>raṇṭŭ</i>
3	<i>mūnnŭ</i>
4	<i>nālŭ</i>
5	<i>añcŭ</i>

Point to one finger and say *onnŭ*. Add one finger at a time: *raṇṭŭ*, *mūnnŭ*, *nālŭ*, *añcŭ*. [REPEAT x2]

Why it's said this way

Malayalam and Tamil were once one language, and the family resemblance is still audible. Malayalam *onnũ* sits beside Tamil *onru*; *raṇṭũ* beside *irandu*; *mūnnũ* beside *moonru*; and *nālũ* beside *naanku*. You do not need to learn the Tamil forms. Listen only for the shared bones.

Why it's said this way

Five moved furthest: an older *aintu* softened toward Malayalam *añcũ*. Say *an-chu* slowly, then normally. The sound comes before its spelling.

Your turn

- Say it: *onnũ*, *raṇṭũ*, *mūnnũ*, *nālũ*, *añcũ* while raising one more finger
- Hear: *mūnnũ*; YOU SHOW: 3
- Hear: *añcũ*; YOU SHOW: 5
- Recall: say *tāmasikkuka*, then say *jōli ceyyuka*

Before you move on

Count from one to five without looking. Which word means three? (***Mo**onnu.*) Which one changed furthest from its older Tamil cousin? (***A**nchu, five.*) Next, the first three numeral shapes arrive one small step at a time.

7.2 ు · ూ · ృ — three numeral shapes

Say *onnũ*, *raṇṭũ*, *mūnnũ*. You already own the meanings and sounds; this lesson adds only their three numeral shapes.

Script

- ు means 1: *onnũ*.
- ూ means 2: *raṇṭũ*.
- ృ means 3: *mūnnũ*.

Point in order, then out of order: ృ ు ూ.

Writing — observe and trace

Keep the models visible. Finger-trace 𐌲, 𐌺, and 𐌽 once each. Say the number word only after your finger stops. Do not copy from memory yet.

Before you move on

Point to 𐌺 and say it. (*Randu.*) Which shape means three? (𐌽.)
How many new shapes arrived? (**Three.**)

7.3 𐌲 · 𐌺 — finish the first five numerals

Read 𐌲 𐌺 𐌽. Two shapes remain in the first group.

Script

- 𐌲 means 4: *nālŭ.*
- 𐌺 means 5: *añcŭ.*

Now point through 𐌲 𐌺 𐌽 𐌲 𐌺. The first five numeral shapes are complete.

Writing — observe and trace

Keep both models visible. Trace 𐌲 once and 𐌺 once. Then circle the one you hear: *Hear: añcŭ.* (𐌺.)

Before you move on

Which shape means four? (𐌲.) Read 𐌺. (*Anchu.*) How many new shapes did this lesson add? (**Two.**)

7.4 𐌶 — one new letter unlocks five familiar words

Say one to five, then read their numerals: 𐌲 𐌺 𐌽 𐌲 𐌺. The words themselves need only one letter you have not met.

Script

ഒ is independent short *o*. It begins ഒന്ന്, *onnŭ*, one.

Every other shape in this row is already familiar:

numeral	word	said
൧	ഒന്ന്	<i>onnŭ</i>
൨	രണ്ട്	<i>raṇṭŭ</i>
൩	മൂന്ന്	<i>mūnnŭ</i>
൪	നാല്	<i>nālŭ</i>
൫	അഞ്ച്	<i>añcŭ</i>

Writing — observe and trace

Trace ഒ once with its model visible. Then point from ൧ to ഒന്ന് and say *onnŭ*. Read the remaining four rows; do not copy the whole row yet.

Before you move on

Which new letter begins *onnŭ*? (ഒ.) Read ൩ and മൂന്ന്. (*Moonnu*, *three*.) How many new letters appeared? (One.)

7.5 ൧ ൨ ൩ ൪ ൫ — one visible copy

Point through ൧ ൨ ൩ ൪ ൫ and say the five words. Keep the model visible.

Writing — guided copy

Copy the row once directly beneath its model. Look back after every shape if you need to. Say *onnŭ* through *añcŭ* as you check your copy. Repair only one shape.

Before you move on

Read ൪. (*Naalu*.) Which written word begins with the new letter ഒ? (ഒന്ന്, *onnŭ*.) No new shape was added here.

7.6 Five numerals — hide, then write

Study 𐌲 𐌺 𐌽 𐌟 𐌹 for five seconds. Say each number, then cover the row.

Writing — delayed copy

Write the five numerals in order while the model is hidden. If one will not come, peek once, cover it again, and continue. Uncover and repair one place.

Before you move on

Say the row without looking. What made this harder than the previous lesson? (**The model was hidden before writing.**)

7.7 Three heard numbers — write their numerals

Cover the answer line. You will hear familiar words, never an untaught form.

Writing — dictation

Hear: *raņtŭ* — *añcŭ* — *mūnnŭ*

Write the three numeral shapes from sound alone. Then uncover and compare: 𐌺 𐌹 𐌽. Repair one shape if needed; do not rewrite the whole line.

Before you move on

Write the numeral for *nālŭ* from sound alone. (𐌟.) You are now ready to hear six through ten before meeting any of their shapes.

7.8 Six to ten — voice first

Count *onnŭ* through *añcŭ*. Keep your pencil down: the next five meanings and sounds come before their shapes.

The letters in this word

quantity	said
6	<i>ārŭ</i>
7	<i>ēlŭ</i>
8	<i>eṭṭŭ</i>
9	<i>ombatŭ</i>
10	<i>pattŭ</i>

Say the row once slowly, then once at counting speed. [REPEAT x2]

Why it's said this way

The middle sound of *ēlŭ* is the curled **zh** heard in the name *Tamil* in its native form. Malayalam and Tamil kept it; Kannada and Telugu hardened it. Practise only the sound now: *e-zhu*. The written letter waits for a later micro-lesson.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

Ompathu grew from an old word for **one** plus *pattŭ*, **ten**: one short of ten. Before *p*, the older *n* becomes *m*. Say *on-pattŭ* slowly, then let it settle into *ombatŭ*.

Your turn

- Say it: *ārŭ*, *ēlŭ*, *eṭṭŭ*, *ombatŭ*, *pattŭ*
- Hear: *ēlŭ*; YOU SHOW: 7
- Hear: *ombatŭ*; YOU SHOW: 9
- Recall: say *-ikkŭ*, then say

Before you move on

Count six to ten. Which word preserves the rare *zh*? (***Ezhu***.) How is *ombatŭ* built? (**One plus ten: one short of ten.**) Next, the numeral shapes arrive in groups of three or fewer.

7.9 ࣄ · ࣅ · ࣆ — three more numeral shapes

Say *ārŭ*, *ēlŭ*, *eṭṭŭ*. Their sounds and quantities are familiar; only the shapes are new.

Script

- ࣄ means 6: *ārŭ*.
- ࣅ means 7: *ēlŭ*.
- ࣆ means 8: *eṭṭŭ*.

Point out of order: ࣆ ࣄ ࣅ.

Writing — observe and trace

Keep the models visible. Trace ࣄ, ࣅ, and ࣆ once each. Say the word after each trace. Memory writing waits.

Before you move on

Which shape means seven? (ࣅ.) Read ࣆ. (*Ettu.*) How many new shapes arrived? (**Three.**)

7.10 ࣇ · ࣈ — nine and ten

Read ࣄ ࣅ ࣆ. Two shapes finish the sequence.

Script

- ࣇ means 9: *ombatŭ*.
- ࣈ means 10: *pattŭ*.

Point through ࣄ ࣅ ࣆ ࣇ ࣈ and say the words once.

Writing — observe and trace

Trace ࣇ once and ࣈ once with their models visible. Circle the one you hear: *Hear: ombatŭ.* (ࣇ.)

Before you move on

Which shape means ten? (൧.) Read ന്. (*Ompathu.*) This lesson added two shapes, not five.

7.11 ഏ · ഴ — two letters unlock the second row

Say six to ten, then read ന് ഴ ് ന് ൧. Two letters remain before every written word in the row is decodable.

Script

- ഏ is independent long *e*.
- ഴ is the curled *zh* you already heard in *ēlū*.

Together with the familiar chandrakkala, they begin and finish ഏഴ്, *ēlū*.

numeral	word	said
൩	ആറ്	<i>ārū</i>
൪	ഏഴ്	<i>ēlū</i>
൫	എട്ട്	<i>eṭṭū</i>
൬	ഒമ്പത്	<i>ombatū</i>
൭	പത്ത്	<i>pattū</i>

Writing — observe and trace

Trace ഏ once and ഴ once with the models visible. Then point through ഏഴ് and say *ēlū*. Whole-word memory writing waits.

Before you move on

Which letter carries the rare *zh*? (൴.) Read ൴ — ഏഴ്. (*Ezhu, seven.*) How many new letters appeared? (**Two.**)

7.12 ന് ഴ ് ന് ൧ — one supported copy

Read ന് ഴ ് ന് ൧. Keep both models below visible.

Writing — guided copy

Copy က ၅ ျ ဏ် ယ once. Then copy အိဉ် — ၅ once. Look back whenever you need. Check only the two new letters အိ and ဉ, then stop.

Before you move on

Read your copied word. (*Ezhu, seven.*) Which numeral belongs beside it? (၅.) No new shape was added here.

7.13 အိဉ် — hide, then write

Study အိဉ် — ၅ for five seconds. Say *ēlǔ*, then cover both forms.

Writing — delayed copy

Write the word and numeral while the model is hidden. Peek once if needed, cover again, and finish. Uncover and repair one shape rather than rewriting.

Before you move on

Which letter carries the curled sound? (ဉ.) What changed from the guided copy? (**The model was hidden before writing.**)

7.14 Heard numbers — write without a model

Cover the answer line. Every sound and shape has already had a supported turn.

Writing — dictation and transcription

Hear: *ārǔ* — *ēlǔ* — *ombatǔ*

Write the three numerals from sound alone. For *ēlǔ*, also write the word. Then uncover: က — ၅ အိဉ် — ဏ်. Compare and repair one place.

Before you move on

Write the numeral for *pattǔ*. (ယ.) Write the word you practised for seven. (အိဉ်.) Next comes a cumulative, no-new-shape payoff.

7.15 One to ten — the cumulative payoff

Count from *onnũ* to *pattũ* once without looking. No new word or shape appears in this lesson.

Your turn — read, not recite

Read these shuffled numerals before looking back at the ordered row:

൭ ൨ ൧൦ ൫ ൮

൩ ൯ ൧ ൩ ൪

Now check against ൧ ൨ ൩ ൪ ൫ ൬ ൭ ൮ ൯ ൧൦.

Why it's said this way

- Which word preserves the rare *zh*? (ഏഴ്, *ēlũ*, seven.)
- Which word means one short of ten? (ഒമ്പത്, *ombatũ*, nine.)
- Which first-five word shifted furthest from older *aintu*? (അഞ്ച്, *añcũ*.)

Writing — independent dictation

Cover the answer. *Hear*: *ēlũ* Write its numeral and word from sound alone. Uncover and compare: ൭ — ഏഴ്. Repair one shape if needed.

Before you move on

Count one to ten, then read ൯ ൪ ൭ out of order. You can now hear, say, read, and write a representative part of the complete number sequence.

7.16 ̣ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ൯ — what does it do?

One character this time. Just one — and you have been saying it for pages without knowing which mark on the page it was.

Script you'll notice: ്

് — *no sound of its own — it takes one away.*

It is a **vowel-killer**. Every consonant in this script arrives with an *a* already inside it — that is what an abugida is. This mark takes the *a* back, leaving the bare consonant. It is how the script writes two consonants in a row.

You already say these, and every one of them has ് somewhere inside it:

- നമസ്കാരം *namaskāram* — hello / greetings (namaskāram — “a making of a bow”)
- നന്ദി *nandi* — thank you
- ഇല്ല *illa* — no / there isn’t (illa — the negative)
- പേര് *pēr* — name

Writing: ് — copy what you see

Put your pen on ് and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ് in the ones that have it

നമസ്കാരം · നന്ദി · ശരി

- *Trace it:* ് three times, and each time say what it does: **it kills the built-in *a***
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ് once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ă? What does it do to the consonant it sits on? (**Takes away the built-in a.**) Name one word you already say that contains it.

Chapter 8

Please

Modes: 🗣️ voice (1) ✍️ pen (1) 🗣️ Hands-free start: first 1 of 2 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say please in Malayalam, and soften a request with the everyday verb ending instead.

Say dayavāyi, split it into daya 'compassion' plus -vāyi, then use the plainer -u verb ending as the everyday alternative.

8.1 ദയവായി (dayavāyi) — please (as a compassion)

Malayalam’s “please” turns compassion into an adverb: do this thing **as a kindness**.

What to know first

ദയവായി = please, literally “**kindly / as a compassion**.” Two pieces:

- ദയ (daya) = **compassion, kindness, grace** — from Sanskrit **daya**.
- -വായി (-vāyi) = “**having become / as**,” turning the noun into “*in the manner of* compassion” — i.e. **kindly**. (The true historical seam is *dayavu* “kindness” + -ആയി -āyi, the adverb of ആകുക ākuka “to become”; we split it -vāyi here just to keep the *daya* root visible.)

So *dayavāyi* asks you to act *kindly, as a kindness*. Where Tamil and Telugu say “**do** the kindness” and Kannada “having **placed** it,” Malayalam makes kindness the **manner** of the whole request.

The family resemblance is unmistakable, and it reaches beyond Dravidian: **Arabic** *min faḍlik* (“from your **grace**”) and **Hindi** *kṛpayā* (from *kṛpā*, “**compassion**”) ask by the same grace-naming instinct.

Why it’s said this way

daya + a light verb, four ways:

- Malayalam ദയവായി *dayavāyi* — compassion + **as / having become**
- Tamil தயவுசெய்து *tayavu seytu* — kindness + **do**
- Kannada ದಯವಿಟ್ಟು *dayaviṭṭu* — compassion + **having placed**
- Telugu దయచేసి *dayacēsi* — compassion + **having done**

Why it’s said this way

Honestly: as elsewhere in the family, the standalone word is a touch **formal / emphatic**. Everyday Malayalam politeness leans on the **respectful request** form of the verb — endings like -*u* (-*ū*) or -*ṇam* (-*aṇam*): ഇരിക്കൂ (*irikkū*) “please sit,” പറയൂ (*parayū*) “please tell me.” Add ദയവായി in front when you want the courtesy spoken aloud.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

The heart of the word is *va* stretched by the **long-ā** sign *ā* (-*ā*) — then *ya* + the *i* sign (*i*). Malayalam’s rounded letters hang their vowel-signs to the right; the long *ā* is simply a tall stroke after the consonant, the same *ā* you would meet across the Dravidian scripts.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “daya” — compassion — then “-vāyi,” as / kindly
- the whole word — “dayavāyi” = please
- the everyday way — the verb ending: “irikkū” = please sit

Before you move on

What is the Malayalam word for please? (ദയവായി *dayavāyi*.)
 What do its pieces mean? (“**Compassion**” *daya* + “**as / having become**” *-vāyi* — *kindly*.) Which cousins ask the same way?
 (Tamil, Kannada, Telugu with *daya* — plus Arabic *faḍl*, Hindi *kṛpā*.) What carries “please” in ordinary speech? (The respectful verb form, endings like -ഓ *-ū* / -ണി *-aṇani*.)

8.2 ി — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ള — what does it do?

One character this time. Just one — and you have been saying it for pages without knowing which mark on the page it was.

Script you’ll notice: ി

ി — *i*.

It is a **vowel sign**. It is not a letter and never stands alone: it attaches to a consonant and **replaces** the *a* built into it with *i*. Replaces, not adds — the *a* is gone.

You already say these, and every one of them has ി somewhere inside it:

- നന്ദി *nandi* — thank you
- ശരി *śari* — okay / alright / correct
- സാരമില്ല *sāramilla* — it doesn’t matter / no problem / you’re welcome
- പോയി വരാം *pōyi varāṁ* — goodbye (lit. “I’ll go and come back”)

Writing: ി — copy what you see

Put your pen on ി and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ി in the ones that have it

നന്ദി · ശരി · നമസ്കാരം

- *Trace it:* ി three times, saying *i* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ി once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ി? What vowel does it put on the consonant it attaches to — and what does it take off? (**Puts *i* on; takes the built-in *a* off.**) Name one word you already say that contains it.

Chapter 9

Sorry

Modes: 🗣️ voice (1) ✍️ pen (1) 🖱️ Hands-free start: first 1 of 2 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can apologise in Malayalam with *kṣamikkaṇaṁ*, and use the plainer *kṣamikkū* when it suits.

*Say *kṣamikkaṇaṁ*, hear the necessitative -aṇaṁ softening it into politeness, then drop to the plain *kṣamikkū*.*

9.1 ക്ഷമിക്കണം (*kṣamikkaṇaṁ*) — (you) should forgive / sorry

You already know ദയവായി and the necessitative -ണം ending mentioned there. Malayalam’s “sorry” is that very ending, now carrying a forgiveness-verb.

What to know first

- ക്ഷമ (*kṣama*) = “**forgiveness, patience**” — the Sanskrit noun.
- -ഇക്കുക (*-ikkuka*) = a **verb-making suffix**: *kṣama* + *-ikkuka* → ക്ഷമിക്കുക (*kṣamikkuka*), “**to forgive**.”
- -ണം (-*aṇaṁ*) = the **necessitative** ending, “**must / should**” — literally *kṣamikkaṇaṁ* says “[you] **must forgive**,” used as a softened, polite request exactly the way English can soften a request into “you should really forgive me” without meaning it as an order.

So ക്ഷമിക്കണം leans on obligation to be polite — a very different move from a plain imperative.

Why it's said this way

- Malayalam ക്ഷമിക്കണം *kṣamikkanaṁ* — Sanskrit *kṣama* + **-ikkuka** (verb) + **-aṇaṁ** (necessitative: “must/should”)
- Kannada ಕ್ಷಮಿಸಿ *kṣamisi* — Sanskrit *kṣamā* + **-isu** (verb) + **-i** (imperative)
- Telugu క్షమించండి *kṣamiṇcaṇḍi* — Sanskrit *kṣamā* + **-iṅcu** (verb) + **-aṇḍi** (imperative)
- Tamil மன்னிக்கவும் *mannikkavum* — its **own** native root *manni*, not Sanskrit at all

Why it's said this way

ക്ഷമിക്കണം is a genuine, common way to ask forgiveness — but Malayalam speakers reach just as often for the plain imperative ക്ഷമിക്കൂ (*kṣamikkū*, using the -ൂ ending from the please lesson) or simply the borrowed English “sorry.”

Your turn

- *Say it*: “kṣama” — the Sanskrit noun, forgiveness
- *Say it*: the verb — “kṣamikkuka,” to forgive — then “kṣamikkanaṁ,” you should forgive
- *Say it*: the plainer version — “kṣamikkū,” using the -ū ending you know
- *Recall*: say

Before you move on

What does ക്ഷമിക്കണം literally say, and why is that polite? (“[You] **must** forgive” — the necessitative **-aṇaṁ** softens an obligation into a request, same as ദയവായി’s note on -aṇaṁ.) Which cousins also verb-ify *kṣama*? (**Kannada and Telugu**; **Tamil** uses its own root *manni*.) What’s a plainer alternative? (**Kṣamikkū**, using the -ū ending, or borrowed English “sorry.”)

9.2 ഓ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ി — what does it do?

One character this time. Just one — and you have been saying it for pages without knowing which mark on the page it was.

Script you'll notice: ഓ

ഓ — *ā*.

It is a **vowel sign**. It is not a letter and never stands alone: it attaches to a consonant and **replaces** the *a* built into it with *ā*. Replaces, not adds — the *a* is gone.

You already say these, and every one of them has ഓ somewhere inside it:

- നമസ്കാരം *namaskāram* — hello / greetings (namaskāram — “a making of a bow”)
- സാരമില്ല *sāramilla* — it doesn’t matter / no problem / you’re welcome
- പോയി വരാം *pōyi varām* — goodbye (lit. “I’ll go and come back”)
- നാളെ കാണാം *nāle kāṇām* — see you tomorrow

Writing: ഓ — copy what you see

Put your pen on ഓ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ഓ in the ones that have it

നമസ്കാരം · സാരമില്ല · നന്ദി

- *Trace it:* ഓ three times, saying $\bar{a}$ as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ഓ once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ഓ? What vowel does it put on the consonant it attaches to — and what does it take off? (**Puts $\bar{a}$ on; takes the built-in a off.**) Name one word you already say that contains it.

Chapter 10

Days of the Week

Modes: 👁 eyes (1) ✍ pen (1) 🔄 Hands-free start: none of the 2 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name the seven days of the Malayalam week and say which planet each one is named for.

Name the seven planet-days, separate the native ones from the Sanskrit ones, and explain their near-identity with Tamil's.

10.1 തിങ്കൾ to ഞായർ — the week Malayalam shares with Tamil

Malayalam and Tamil are close cousins — they were once, long ago, the same language — and nowhere does that show more clearly than in the words for the days of the week.

What to know first

Malayalam	planet-word	meaning	compare Tamil
തിങ്കളാഴ്ച	<i>tiṅkaḷ</i>	“Moon”	<i>thingaḷ</i> — nearly identical
ചൊവ്വാഴ്ച	<i>covva</i>	traditionally “the red one”	<i>cevvāy</i> — the same word, worn differently
ബുധനാഴ്ച	<i>budhan</i>	Mercury	Sanskrit Budha , same as Tamil <i>pudhan</i>
വ്യാഴാഴ്ച	<i>vyāzham</i>	Jupiter	matches Tamil’s <i>viyāzhan</i> closely
വെള്ളിയാഴ്ച	<i>velli</i>	traditionally “silver”	<i>velli</i> — the same word
ശനിയാഴ്ച	<i>śani</i>	Saturn	Sanskrit Śani , same as Tamil <i>sani</i>
ഞായറാഴ്ച	<i>ñāyar</i>	“Sun”	<i>ñāyīru</i> — the same root

Why it’s said this way

This is the closest family match anywhere in Dravidian: **tiṅkaḷ/thingaḷ**, **velli/velli**, and **ñāyar/ñāyīru** are essentially **the same words**, because Malayalam only became a distinct language from Tamil within roughly the last thousand years or so. Tamil builds its weekday names with കിഴ്ചമ (kizhamai, “day of the week”), while Malayalam builds them with ആഴ്ച (ālca, “week”). The two words are not confirmed cognates; treat them as two languages solving the same naming problem separately, not necessarily as one shared root. Like Tamil, Malayalam mixes **native** planet-words (Moon, Mars, Venus, Sun) with **Sanskrit** ones (Mercury, Jupiter, Saturn) — the same split, inherited from the same shared ancestor language.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “tiṅkaḷ” — moon — then “āḷca,” week
- the shared words — “veḷḷi” (Venus), same in both Malayalam and Tamil
- the Sanskrit ones — “budhan, vyāzham, śani” — Mercury, Jupiter, Saturn

Before you move on

Why do Malayalam and Tamil’s day-names look so alike? (**They were the same language until roughly a thousand years ago.**) Which planet-names does Malayalam share almost word-for-word with Tamil? (**tiṅkaḷ/Moon, veḷḷi/Venus, ṇāyar/Sun** — and *covva*/Mars, a worn variant of *cevvāy*.) Which three come from Sanskrit in both languages? (**Mercury (Budha), Jupiter (vyāzham/viyāzhaṇ), Saturn (Śani).**)

10.2 ന — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ഞ — what does it do?

One character this time. Just one — and you have been saying it for pages without knowing which mark on the page it was.

Script you’ll notice: ന

ന — *na*.

It is a **consonant**, and in this script a consonant is never bare: it comes with an *a* already in it. So it is not *n*, it is **na**.

You already say these, and every one of them has ന somewhere inside it:

- നമസ്കാരം *namaskāraṁ* — hello / greetings (namaskāraṁ — “a making of a bow”)
- നന്ദി *nandi* — thank you
- എന്റെ *enre* — my
- സന്തോഷം *santōṣaṁ* — joy / pleased to meet you

Writing: ന — copy what you see

Put your pen on ന and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ന in the ones that have it

നമസ്കാരം · നന്ദി · ഇല്ല

- *Trace it:* ന three times, saying *na* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ന once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ന? What sound does it carry? (*na*.)
Name one word you already say that contains it.

Chapter 11

Four Core Colours

Modes: ⇄ voice (1) ✍ pen (1) ⇄ Hands-free start: first 1 of 2 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name black, white, red and blue in Malayalam.

Say karuppŭ, vellā, cuvappŭ and nīla, and mark which three are native Dravidian and which one is a shared Sanskrit loan.

11.1 കറുപ്പ്, വെള്ള, ചുവപ്പ്, നീല — the same split as Tamil

You’ve seen Malayalam and Tamil share day-names almost word-for-word. Their colors follow the exact same family pattern.

What to know first

- കറുപ്പ് (*karuppŭ*) = “**black**” — matches Tamil *karuppu* almost exactly.
- വെള്ള (*vellā*) = “**white**” — the same **vel-** “bright/silvery” root as Tamil *vellai*.
- ചുവപ്പ് (*cuvappŭ*) = “**red**” — a related word from the same Dravidian root family as Tamil *sivappu*, though the two differ in both their opening consonant’s sound and their vowel — a looser cousin than *karuppŭ/karuppu* or *vellā/vellai*, which match almost exactly.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

നീല (*nīla*) = “blue” — the same **Sanskrit** loan Tamil uses (*nīlam*), and the same one Hindi uses (*nīlā*). Blue is where Malayalam, Tamil, and Hindi all converge on one shared Sanskrit word, even though Malayalam and Tamil otherwise built their own native words for black, white, and red.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “karuppū, vellā, cuvappū” — black, white, red
- “nīla” — blue, shared with Tamil and Hindi
- the family match — “karuppū/karuppu, vellā/vellai, cuvappū/sivappu”

Before you move on

Which three Malayalam colors closely match Tamil’s own words? (**Karuppū, vellā, cuvappū** — black, white, red.) Which color is a shared Sanskrit loan across Malayalam, Tamil, and Hindi? (**Blue** — நீல *nīla* / நீலம் *nīlam* / नीला *nīlā*.)

11.2 ് — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ് — what does it do?

One character this time. Just one — and you have been saying it for pages without knowing which mark on the page it was.

Script you’ll notice: ്

് — *ma*.

It is a **consonant**, and in this script a consonant is never bare: it comes with an *a* already in it. So it is not *m*, it is **ma**.

You already say these, and every one of them has ് somewhere inside it:

- നമസ്കാരം *namaskāram* — hello / greetings (*namaskāram* — “a making of a bow”)
- സാരമില്ല *sāramilla* — it doesn’t matter / no problem / you’re welcome
- താമസിക്കുക *tāmasikkuka* — to live, to stay
- എനിക്ക് മലയാളം അറിയാം *enikkū malayāḷam ariyāmi* — ‘I know Malayalam’

Writing: മ — copy what you see

Put your pen on മ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find മ in the ones that have it

നമസ്കാരം · സാരമില്ല · നന്ദി

- *Trace it:* മ three times, saying *ma* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find മ once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — മ? What sound does it carry? (*ma.*)
Name one word you already say that contains it.

Chapter 12

Family

Modes: 🗣️ voice (1) 🖱️ Hands-free start: all 1 lesson.

By the end of this chapter: I can name my father, mother, and my older and younger brothers and sisters in Malayalam.

Say the six family words in age-graded pairs, and note that Malayalam built its own sibling set rather than tracking Tamil's.

12.1 അച്ഛൻ, അമ്മ, and four sibling words — Malayalam's own set

Malayalam and Tamil share a great deal of their vocabulary — but family words are where Malayalam goes its own way further than you might expect, while still keeping the family's signature age-first sibling system.

What to know first

- അച്ഛൻ (*acchan*) = “**father**” — a different form from Tamil's *appā*; **this word's own deeper origin is less settled** than the simple *appā/amma* pattern, and worth a linguist's extra look.
- അമ്മ (*amma*) = “**mother**” — matches the family's shared *amma* pattern closely.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

Malayalam	meaning
ചേട്ടൻ (<i>cēṭṭan</i>)	older brother
അനിയൻ (<i>aniyan</i>)	younger brother
ചേച്ചി (<i>cēcci</i>)	older sister
അനിയത്തി (<i>aniyatti</i>)	younger sister

Notice these don't closely match Tamil/Kannada/Telugu's *aṇṇan/anna*, *tambi/tammuḍu*, *akkā/akka*, or *tangai/celli* — Malayalam built its own set of sibling words. But the **structure** is identical: **four** words, not two, split by whether the sibling is **older or younger than you** — the same signature pattern you've now seen across all four Dravidian languages, even where the specific words diverge.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “acchan, amma” — father, mother
- “cēṭṭan, aniyān” — older/younger brother
- “cēcci, aniyatti” — older/younger sister

Before you move on

Do Malayalam's sibling words closely match Tamil's? (**No** — Malayalam built its own distinct set (cēṭṭan, aniyān, cēcci, and aniyatti), unlike how closely Kannada and Telugu track Tamil.) Does Malayalam still split siblings by age? (**Yes** — four words, older vs. younger, the same structural pattern across the whole Dravidian family.)

Chapter 13

Head and Hand

Modes: ⇄ voice (1) ✍ pen (2) ⇄ Hands-free start: first 1 of 3 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name the head and the hand in Malayalam.

Say thala and kai, and match them against Tamil's talai and kai.

13.1 തല, കൈ — head and hand, matching Tamil closely

Malayalam's family words (*achan*, *cēṭṭan*...) went their own way from Tamil's. Body parts snap right back to the close match you saw in colors and days.

What to know first

- തല (*tala*) = “**head**” — matches Tamil *talai* closely.
- കൈ (*kai*) = “**hand**” — matches Tamil *kai* almost exactly.

Both native Dravidian, both close cousins of Tamil's own words — a reminder that Malayalam and Tamil's vocabulary agreement varies concept by concept, not uniformly.

Your turn

- *Say it:* “tala” — head

- *Say it:* “kai” — hand
- *Say it:* the match — nearly identical to Tamil’s talai/kai
- *Recall:* say *dayavāyi*

Before you move on

What are Malayalam’s words for head and hand, and how closely do they match Tamil? (തല **tala**, കൈ **kai** — very closely, both native Dravidian.)

13.2 ത — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: മ — what does it do?

One character this time. Just one — and you have been saying it for pages without knowing which mark on the page it was.

Script you’ll notice: ത

ത — *ta*.

It is a **consonant**, and in this script a consonant is never bare: it comes with an *a* already in it. So it is not *t*, it is **ta**.

You already say these, and every one of them has ത somewhere inside it:

- അതെ — yes (athe — “that [is so]”)
- എന്ത് — what
- സന്തോഷം *santōṣam* — joy / pleased to meet you
- താമസിക്കുക *tāmasikkuka* — to live, to stay

Writing: ത — copy what you see

Put your pen on ത and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ത in the ones that have it
അതെ · എന്ത് · നമസ്കാരം
- *Trace it:* ത three times, saying *ta* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ത once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ത? What sound does it carry? (*ta.*)
Name one word you already say that contains it.

13.3 S — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ത — what does it do?

One character this time. Just one — and you have been saying it for pages without knowing which mark on the page it was.

Script you'll notice: S

S — *ta.*

It is a **consonant**, and in this script a consonant is never bare: it comes with an *a* already in it. So it is not *t*, it is **ṭa**.

You already say these, and every one of them has S somewhere inside it:

- വീണ്ടും കാണാം — we'll meet again
- ഒന്ന് രണ്ട് മൂന്ന് നാല് അഞ്ച് — one to five
- ആറ് ഏഴ് എട്ട് ഒമ്പത് പത്ത് — six to ten

- അച്ഛൻ അമ്മ ചേട്ടൻ അനിയൻ ചേച്ചി അനിയത്തി — father, mother, and four age-graded sibling words

Writing: S — copy what you see

Put your pen on **S** and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find **S** in the ones that have it

നമസ്കാരം

- *Trace it:* **S** three times, saying *ta* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find **S** once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — **S**? What sound does it carry? (*ta*.)
Name one word you already say that contains it.

Chapter 14

Seasons

Modes: ⇄ voice (1) ✍ pen (1) ⇄ Hands-free start: first 1 of 2 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name Malayalam’s four seasons, including the monsoon that sits at the centre of the year.

Say vēnalkkālam, mazhakkālam and śaithyakālam as native compounds, then vasanthakālam as the shared Sanskrit loan.

14.1 വസന്തകാലം, വേനൽ, മഴ, ശൈത്യം — the same pattern as Tamil

Malayalam’s season words follow the very same recipe as Tamil’s — native words for what a season *feels like*, plus one shared Sanskrit loan for spring.

What to know first

Malayalam	meaning	source
വസന്തകാലം (<i>vasanthakaalam</i>)	“spring”	<i>vasantham</i> — the same Sanskrit loan as Tamil
വേനൽക്കാലം (<i>venalkkaalam</i>)	“summer”	വേനൽ <i>venal</i> , native Dravidian, matching Tamil <i>kodai</i> ’s role
മഴക്കാലം (<i>mazhakkaalam</i>)	“rainy season”	മഴ <i>mala</i> , native Dravidian, matching Tamil <i>mazhai</i> closely
ശൈത്യകാലം (<i>śaithyakaalam</i>)	“winter/cold season”	<i>śaitya</i> — this one leans more Sanskrit-flavored than Tamil’s native <i>kulir</i>

Every one shares the ending **-കാലം** (*-kaalam*, “time/season”) — itself ultimately from Sanskrit काल (*kāla*), but assimilated so long ago that it functions as ordinary vocabulary, quite unlike a fresher loan like *vasantham*.

Why it’s said this way

As with Tamil, Kerala’s actual climate is shaped far more by **മഴക്കാലം** (*mazhakkaalam*, “the rains” — including Kerala’s famous southwest monsoon) than by a clean four-way Western split. The rains aren’t a footnote to “summer” or “autumn” — they’re their own major season, central to daily and agricultural life.

Your turn

- *Say it*: “venal” — summer heat — then “kaalam,” season
- *Say it*: “mazhakkaalam” — the rains, the real central season
- *Say it*: “śaithyakaalam” — the cold season
- *Say it*: the shared loanword — “vasanthakaalam,” spring, same as Tamil
- *Recall*: say *kṣamikkaṇaṁ*

Before you move on

Which Malayalam season-words match Tamil's closely, and which is shared with Tamil as a Sanskrit loan? (**Venal**/**māla** match Tamil's *kodai/mazhai*; **vasanthakaalam** is the same Sanskrit loan as Tamil's *vasanta kaalam*.) What's the real central season in Kerala's climate? (**Mazhakkaalam**, the rains/monsoon.)

14.2 ഴ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: **ട** — what does it do?

One character this time. Just one — and you have been saying it for pages without knowing which mark on the page it was.

Script you'll notice: ഴ

ഴ — *lla*.

It is a **consonant**, and in this script a consonant is never bare: it comes with an *a* already in it. So it is not *ll*, it is **lla**.

You already say these, and every one of them has ഴ somewhere inside it:

- ആറ് ഏഴ് എട്ട് ഒമ്പത് പത്ത് — six to ten
- തിങ്കൾ ചൊവ്വ ബുധൻ വ്യാഴം വെള്ളി ശനി ഞായർ — the seven weekdays
- വസന്തകാലം വേനൽക്കാലം മഴക്കാലം ശൈത്യകാലം — spring, summer, monsoon, winter

Writing: ഴ — copy what you see

Put your pen on ഴ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ള in the ones that have it

നമസ്കാരം

- *Trace it:* ള three times, saying *lla* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ള once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ള? What sound does it carry? (*lla*.)
Name one word you already say that contains it.

Chapter 15

Water and Rice

Modes: 🗣️ voice (1) ✍️ pen (1) 🖱️ Hands-free start: first 1 of 2 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name water and rice in Malayalam, keeping raw ari apart from cooked cōru.

Say vellam and explain why it does not match Tamil's n̄r, then split ari from cōru.

15.1 വെള്ളം, അരി, ചോറ് — a different water-word, the same rice-words

For once, Malayalam's everyday word for something basic genuinely **doesn't** match Tamil's — even though water is about as basic as vocabulary gets.

What to know first

വെള്ളം (*vellam*) = “**water**” — and notably, this is **not** built on *n̄r* the way Tamil's *taṇṇ̄r* is. Instead, *vellam* shares the വെൾ (*vel-*, “**bright, white**”) root you already met in *velli*, “silver/ Venus,” from the colors and days lessons — *vellam* originally meant something closer to “**flood, deluge**” before becoming Malayalam's plain, everyday word for water. (*N̄r* itself hasn't vanished from Malayalam — it survives inside compounds like ഇളനീർ *iḷan̄r*, “tender coconut water,” and കണ്ണീർ *kaṇṇ̄r*, “tears” — it's just not the standalone everyday word anymore.)

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

Rice, though, tells the familiar story:

- അരി (*ari*) = “**rice**” (raw grain) — closely matching Tamil *arisi*.
- ചോറ് (*cōrŭ*) = “**cooked rice**” (the meal) — and here Malayalam actually **does** have a Tamil cognate: Tamil keeps its own native சோறு (also *cōrŭ*), used alongside the Sanskrit-influenced *sātam* as an everyday near-synonym. Malayalam simply made *cōrŭ* its main word, where Tamil more often reaches for *sātam*.

Your turn

- Say it: “*vellam*” — water, NOT matching Tamil’s *neer*
- Say it: “*ari*” — raw rice, matching Tamil closely
- Say it: “*cōrŭ*” — cooked rice, Malayalam’s own word
- Recall: say *tiṅkaḷ covva budhan vyāzham velli śani nāyar*

Before you move on

Does Malayalam’s everyday water-word match Tamil’s? (**No** — *vellam* shares the *vel-* “bright/white” root instead, originally meaning “flood”; though *nīr* itself survives in compounds like *iḷanīr* and *kaṇṇīr*.) Does its raw-rice word match Tamil’s? (**Yes** — *ari* closely matches *arisi*.)

15.2 െ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ് — what does it do?

One character this time. Just one — and you have been saying it for pages without knowing which mark on the page it was.

Script you’ll notice: െ

െ — *ō*.

It is a **vowel sign**. It is not a letter and never stands alone: it attaches to a consonant and **replaces** the *a* built into it with *ō*. Replaces, not adds — the *a* is gone.

You already say these, and every one of them has ോ somewhere inside it:

- സന്തോഷം *santōṣaṁ* — joy / pleased to meet you
- സുഖമാണോ? — how are you? (lit. “are you well?”)
- പോയി വരാം *pōyi varāṁ* — goodbye (lit. “I’ll go and come back”)
- ജോലി ചെയ്യുക *jōli ceyyuka* — to work (lit. “work-do”)

Writing: ോ — copy what you see

Put your pen on ോ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ോ in the ones that have it
സന്തോഷം · സുഖമാണോ? · നമസ്കാരം
- *Trace it:* ോ three times, saying *ō* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ോ once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ോ? What vowel does it put on the consonant it attaches to — and what does it take off? (**Puts *ō* on; takes the built-in *a* off.**) Name one word you already say that contains it.

Chapter 16

The Traditional Months

Modes: 🗣 voice (1) ✍ pen (1) 🗣 Hands-free start: first 1 of 2 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name the twelve months of the Malayalam Kollam-era calendar and say which zodiac sign each one carries.

Recite the twelve months from Chirīṇṇam, tie Chirīṇṇam to Leo, and contrast Malayalam’s zodiac naming with Tamil’s nakshatras.

16.1 ചിങ്ങം to കർക്കടകം — Kerala’s own solar calendar, named by the zodiac

Malayalam, like Tamil, has its **own** solar calendar — but even here, the two closest cousins name their months by two **different** logics.

What to know first

ചിങ്ങം, കന്നി, തുലാം, വൃശ്ചികം, ധനു, മകരം, കുംഭം, മീനം, മേടം, ഇടവം, മിഥുനം, കർക്കടകം (*Chirīṇṇam, Kanni, Tulām, Vṛścikam, Dhanu, Makaram, Kumbham, Mīnam, Mēḍam, Iḍavam, Mithunam, Karkīḍakam*).

This is the **Kollam Era** calendar (also called the Malayalam calendar), Kerala’s own solar civil calendar — genuinely separate from the Gregorian, the pan-Indian Hindu lunisolar calendar, **and** Tamil’s solar calendar.

Why it's said this way

Both Tamil's and Malayalam's calendars are **solar**, and both are independent of the Hindu lunisolar system — but they name their months differently. Tamil ties each month to a **nakshatra** (a lunar-mansion star cluster). Malayalam instead names each month directly for the **zodiac sign** (rāśi) the sun is passing through: ചിങ്ങം (*Chinṇam*) = Leo, കന്നി (*Kanni*) = Virgo, തുലാം (*Tulām*) = Libra, and so on straight through the zodiac. Same underlying idea — track the sun's yearly path against the stars — but two Dravidian languages chose two different sets of star-markers to name it by.

ചിങ്ങം 1 (the 1st of Chinṇam) marks the **Malayalam New Year** and the start of the **Onam** festival season — Kerala's own solar calendar, running its own independent year.

Your turn

- *Say it:* the twelve — “Chinṇam, Kanni, Tulām, Vṛścikam, Dhanu, Makaram, Kumbham, Mīnam, Mēḍam, Iḍavam, Mithunam, Karkidakam”
- *Say it:* “Chinṇam = Leo” — a zodiac sign, not a nakshatra
- *Say it:* the contrast — Tamil uses nakshatras, Malayalam uses zodiac signs
- *Recall:* say *karuppū vella cuvappū nīla*

Before you move on

Is Malayalam's calendar solar or lunisolar? (**Solar** — like Tamil's, and separate from the Hindu lunisolar system.) How does it differ from Tamil's in naming logic? (**Zodiac signs** — Chinṇam=Leo, Kanni=Virgo — rather than Tamil's nakshatra-based names.) What does Chinṇam 1 mark? (**Malayalam New Year**, the start of the Onam season.)

16.2 ൾ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ർ — what does it do?

One character this time. Just one — and you have been saying it for pages without knowing which mark on the page it was.

Script you’ll notice: ഌ

ഌ — *a nasal, ridden on the syllable before it.*

It is a **nasal**, written as a mark rather than as a letter. It rides on the syllable before it and turns the end of it nasal.

You already say these, and every one of them has ഌ somewhere inside it:

- നമസ്കാരം *namaskāraṁ* — hello / greetings (namaskāraṁ — “a making of a bow”)
- സന്തോഷം *santōṣaṁ* — joy / pleased to meet you
- സുഖം *sukhaṁ* — well-being — and the reply “സുഖമാണ്”
- പോയി വരാം *pōyi varāṁ* — goodbye (lit. “I’ll go and come back”)

Writing: ഌ — copy what you see

Put your pen on ഌ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ഌ in the ones that have it

നമസ്കാരം · സന്തോഷം · നന്ദി

- *Trace it:* ഌ three times, humming the nasal at the end of the syllable as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ഌ once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ㄛ? What does it add to the syllable before it? (**A nasal.**) Name one word you already say that contains it.

Chapter 17

Noon and Midnight

Modes: ⇌ voice (2) ⇌ Hands-free start: all 2 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say noon and midnight in Malayalam and hear paathi, 'half', inside paathira.

Say pāthira, pull pāthi out of it, and show it is a native half-word rather than Sanskrit ardha.

17.1 ഉച്ച — a different Sanskrit metaphor, not a Sanskrit-free one

Kannada and Telugu both reached for Sanskrit's *madhya*, “middle,” to name noon. Malayalam looks different at first glance — but be careful before you call it “native.”

What to know first

ഉച്ച (*ucca*) = “**noon, midday**” — and unlike Kannada's *madhyāhna* or Telugu's *madhyāhnam*, this is **not** a *madhya* (“middle”) compound at all. It most likely shares its root with Tamil உச்சி (*ucci*, “**crown of the head, peak, summit, zenith**”) and Kannada's own ಉಚ್ಚಿ (*ucci*). Here's the honest twist: per Wiktionary, that whole *ucci* family across Tamil and Kannada is itself documented as a **Sanskrit borrowing**, from उच्च (*ucca*, “**high**”). Malayalam's own *ucca* has no fully documented etymology yet, so treat the connection as likely rather than settled — but if it holds, this isn't a case of Malayalam **avoiding** Sanskrit at all. It's Malayalam reaching for a **different** Sanskrit root than its neighbors: *ucca* (“high”) instead of *madhya*

(“middle”). Noon becomes “**the sun at its peak**” rather than “the middle of the day” — the same zenith-based idea inside Arabic’s *az-ẓuhr* (from a root meaning “to appear, become visible/apex”), just arrived at from Sanskrit rather than Arabic.

Why it’s said this way

Don’t walk away thinking Malayalam dodged Sanskrit here while Kannada and Telugu didn’t. The more likely picture: ഉച്ച may be just as Sanskrit-rooted as *madhyāhna* — it’s simply a *different* Sanskrit root (*ucca*, “high,” rather than *madhya*, “middle”). What’s genuinely different is the **metaphor**, not necessarily the **language of origin**.

Your turn

- *Say it*: “ucca” — noon, “the peak” — compare Tamil’s “ucci”
- *Say it*: the honest contrast — Kannada/Telugu’s noon word means “middle”; Malayalam’s most likely means “peak” — both probably still Sanskrit, just different Sanskrit roots
- *Recall*: say *acchan amma cēṭṭan anīyan cēcci aniyatti*

Before you move on

Is ഉച്ച a Sanskrit “middle” word like Kannada’s *madhyāhna*? (**No** — it most likely comes from a *different* Sanskrit root, *ucca*, “high/peak,” not *madhya*, “middle.”) Does that make ഉച്ച a native Dravidian word? (**Not necessarily** — its likely relatives, Tamil *ucci* and Kannada *ucci*, are themselves documented Sanskrit borrowings.)

17.2 പാതിരാ — midnight as “half-night”

ഉച്ച (*ucca*) named noon by the sun’s height. Malayalam builds midnight with a different spatial idea: cut the night in half.

What to know first

പാതിരാ (*pātirā*) means “**midnight**.” It is built on പാതി (*paathi*), the everyday Malayalam word for “**half**”—as in *paathi vila*, “half price”—fused with a shortened form of “night.”

The result has the same “half-night” shape as Telugu అర్ధరాత్రి (*ardharātri*) and Hindi *ādhī rāt*. The pieces are not all cousins, though. Malayalam പാതി is a genuinely different word from Sanskrit **ardha**, the root behind Telugu *ardharātri* and, farther back, Hindi *ādhī*.

So two languages can independently choose the same transparent construction while filling it with unrelated words for “half.” The metaphor matches; the vocabulary does not.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *pātirā* — midnight
- *Say it:* *paathi* — half
- *Say it:* Malayalam *paathi* versus Sanskrit *ardha* — same job, different roots
- *Recall:* read തല കൈ

Before you move on

What does പാതിര build on? (പാതി, “half,” plus a shortened night-word.) Is *paathi* the same root as Telugu *ardha*? (**No.** The two languages share the “half-night” logic but use unrelated half-words.)

Chapter 18

Telling Time

Modes: 🗣️ voice (2) ✍️ pen (1) 🗣️ Hands-free start: first 2 of 3 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say the hour in Malayalam with maṇi, as in oru maṇi, one o'clock.

Say maṇi for hour, bell and gem, then oru maṇi, and state where Malayalam's and Tamil's dictionaries disagree about it.

18.1 ഒരു — one, when something follows it

Count one to five out loud.

Now say the first of them on its own: ഒന്ന്.

What to know first

ഒരു (*oru*) — **one**, with a noun coming after it.

ഒന്ന് and ഒരു are one number wearing two shapes, and which shape you reach for depends on nothing more than whether a noun follows it:

ഒന്ന്	standing alone — <i>how many? one</i>
ഒരു	leaning on a noun — ഒരു പേര്, <i>one name</i>

You counted with the first. The second is the one you will meet on nearly every page from here, because a number usually has something to count.

Tamil keeps the same pair, *oru* against *onru*, split the same way — which is a sign the split is old rather than a tidy-up Malayalam did on its own.

Grammar Lens: the same word does the work of “a”

Malayalam has no word for *a*. A bare noun covers it: പേര് on its own is *name*, *a name*, or *the name*, and which one it is comes from what is being talked about.

But when a speaker wants to set **one unspecified thing** in front of you — the *a* that means *some one or other* — ഒരു is what they say. So the same small word carries two weights:

counting	ഒരു പേര് — <i>one name</i>
introducing	ഒരു പേര് — <i>a name</i>

Nothing in the word changes between those two rows. The difference lives in why it was said, and a listener takes it from the situation — the same bargain Malayalam makes everywhere else it declines to mark something.

The next lesson puts a noun after it straight away, and when it does, this is the shape you will be reading.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- ഒന്ന്, then ഒരു — and say which of the two wants a noun after it
- ഒരു പേര്, and both things it could mean
- what a bare പേര് could mean with nothing in front of it

Before you move on

Which shape of *one* stands alone? (ഒന്ന്.) Which leans on a noun? (ഒരു.) Does Malayalam have a word for *a*? (No — but ഒരു does that work when a speaker wants it done.)

18.2 മണി — one word in Malayalam’s dictionaries, two in Tamil’s

Kannada and Telugu both borrowed Sanskrit’s “bell” word for “hour.” Malayalam’s story is genuinely murkier — and it’s about

to disagree with its closest cousin, Tamil, on how this exact word is even structured.

What to know first

മണി (*maṇi*) = “hour, o’clock” — and it also means “bell, gong” and “gem, jewel, pearl.” Here’s the honest, slightly untidy part: Malayalam’s own dictionary tradition treats **all three of these senses as ONE word**, borrowed from Sanskrit मणि (*maṇi*, “gem, jewel, pearl”) — the same Sanskrit word behind names like *Manipravaḷam* and the mantra syllable in “*om maṇi padme hum.*” Under this account, “bell/hour” isn’t a separate native word at all — it’s just another meaning that grew out of the same borrowed “gem” word (a bell-shaped gem or ornament, perhaps, extending to the bell itself, and then to the hour it announces).

Why it’s said this way

Here’s what makes this genuinely interesting rather than settled: Tamil’s closely related cognate மணி is analyzed very differently by Tamil’s own reference dictionaries — as **two separate, unrelated words** that happen to be spelled and pronounced identically: a **native Dravidian** “bell, gong” word (which extends to “hour”), and a completely separate Sanskrit loan meaning “gem.” The broader comparative Dravidian dictionary (DEDR) does list Malayalam among the languages sharing that native “bell” word too — but even DEDR flags a possible Sanskrit connection for the whole word-family as unresolved. So: two closest-cousin languages, and even the specialists don’t fully agree on whether this is one Sanskrit word wearing three meanings, or a native word and a Sanskrit word that just happen to sound alike.

Grammar Lens: telling the time

ഒരു മണി. — “One o’clock.” (*oru maṇi*, “one hour/bell”)
രണ്ട് മണി. — “Two o’clock.” (*raṇṭu maṇi*, “two hour/bell”)

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “maṇi” — hour, also “bell,” also “gem” — genuinely debated whether that’s one word or two
- “oru maṇi” — one o’clock
- the honest point — Malayalam’s own dictionaries call it one Sanskrit word; Tamil’s call the bell/hour sense a separate, native word

Before you move on

According to Malayalam’s own dictionary tradition, are “hour,” “bell,” and “gem” one word or two? (**One** — all traced to Sanskrit *maṇi*, “gem.”) How does Tamil’s own dictionary tradition treat its cognate word differently? (As **two separate, unrelated homophones** — a native “bell/hour” word and a distinct Sanskrit “gem” loan.) Is this fully settled? (**No** — even the comparative Dravidian dictionary flags the Sanskrit connection as an open question.)

18.3 ഷ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ഷ — what does it do?

One character this time. Just one — and you have been saying it for pages without knowing which mark on the page it was.

Script you’ll notice: ഷ

ഷ — *ṣa*.

It is a **consonant**, and in this script a consonant is never bare: it comes with an *a* already in it. So it is not *ṣ*, it is **ṣa**.

You already say these, and every one of them has ഷ somewhere inside it:

- സന്തോഷം *santōṣam* — joy / pleased to meet you
- ക്ഷമിക്കണം *kṣamikkaṇam* — (you) should forgive / sorry

Writing: ഷ — copy what you see

Put your pen on ഷ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ഷ in the ones that have it

സന്തോഷം · ക്ഷമിക്കണം · നമസ്കാരം

- *Trace it:* ഷ three times, saying *ṣa* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ഷ once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ഷ? What sound does it carry? (*ṣa*.)
Name one word you already say that contains it.

Chapter 19

Asking Someone's Age

Modes: ⇄ voice (1) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 1 lesson.

By the end of this chapter: I can ask how old someone is in Malayalam and answer with a dative subject.

Ask *ningalkku ethra vayassuntū?* and answer *enikku irupatu vayassuntū* – ‘to me twenty age exists’.

19.1 നിങ്ങൾക്ക് എത്ര വയസ്സുണ്ട്? — “to you, how much age exists?”

Same Sanskrit word as Kannada and Telugu — but Malayalam builds a genuinely different sentence around it.

What to know first

വയസ്സ് (*vayass*) = “age” — the same Sanskrit वयस् (*vayas*, “age, vigor,” PIE cousin of Latin *vīs*) behind Kannada’s *vayassu* and Telugu’s *vayasu*.

Grammar Lens: dative subject + “exists”

നിങ്ങൾക്ക് എത്ര വയസ്സുണ്ട്? — “How old are you?”
(formal/plural) — literally “**to you, how much age exists?**” (*ningalkku etra vayassuntū?* — from *ningalkku*, “to you” [dative] + *etra vayassu*, “how much age” + *untū*, “exists.”) എനിക്ക് ഇരുപത് വയസ്സുണ്ട്. — “I am twenty years old.” — literally “**to me twenty age exists.**” (*enikkū irupatu vayassuntū*.)

This is a real grammatical departure from Kannada and Telugu’s plain “your age how-much?” Malayalam puts the **person in the dative case** (“to you,” not “your”) and adds ഉണ്ടു് (*uṇṭũ*, “exists, there is”) — the same existential verb Malayalam uses for ordinary possession and existence sentences generally. So the literal shape is “**to me, twenty years’ worth of age exists**” — a dative-subject-plus-existential-verb construction, genuinely different from its two Dravidian cousins even though the age-word itself is identical.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “vayassu” — age
- “ningalkku etra vayassuṇṭũ?” — how old are you?
- “enikkũ irupatu vayassuṇṭũ” — I am twenty, “to me twenty age exists”

Before you move on

Is Malayalam’s വയസ്സ് the same Sanskrit word as Kannada’s and Telugu’s? (**Yes.**) Does Malayalam ask age the same simple way Kannada and Telugu do? (**No** — it uses a **dative** subject, “to you,” plus the existential verb ഉണ്ടു്, “exists.”) What does *enikkũ irupatu vayassuṇṭũ* literally mean? (“**To me twenty age exists.**”)

Chapter 20

Numbers 11–20 and Weather

Modes: 🗣️ voice (2) ✍️ pen (1) 🗣️ Hands-free start: first 2 of 3 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can count from eleven to twenty in Malayalam and say what the weather is doing.

Say kālāvastha as ‘the state of time’, split it into kālam and avastha, and add mazha peyyunnu for rain.

20.1 പതിനൊന്ന്, ഇരുപത് — transparent “two-tens,” matching Tamil closely

Malayalam keeps the same “two-tens” idea you’ve now seen across this whole family — and here it’s still fully visible on the surface, almost identically to its closest cousin, Tamil.

What to know first

Malayalam’s teens echo പത്ത് (*pattŭ*, “ten”) plus each digit. പതിനൊന്ന് (*patinonnŭ*) is 11, പന്ത്രണ്ട് (*pantraṇṭŭ*) is 12, and the pattern continues through പത്തൊമ്പത് (*pattombatŭ*, 19) — the same digit-plus-ten-echo compounding as its Dravidian cousins.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

ഇരുപത് (*irupatŭ*, “twenty”) = ഇരു (*iru*, an older word for “two”) + പത്ത് (*pattŭ*, “ten”) — still fully visible as “two-tens” today. This matches **Tamil’s own** *irupatu* almost letter-for-letter, both languages having kept this compound transparent — unlike Telugu’s *iravai*,

which most likely continues the same underlying pattern but has worn down past the point of visibly splitting apart.

Your turn

- *Say it:* “patinonnũ, pantraṇṭũ” — 11, 12
- *Say it:* “iru” — an older word for two, “pattũ” — ten
- *Say it:* “irupattũ” — twenty, “two-tens,” transparent
- *Recall:* say *vasantakālani venalkkālani malakkālani śaityakālani*, then read വെള്ളം അരി പോറ്

Before you move on

How are Malayalam’s teens built? (പത്ത (ten) + a digit, compounded.) What two pieces build ഇരുപത് (twenty)? (ഇരു “two” + പത്ത “ten” — “two-tens.”) Which other Dravidian language keeps this exact same transparent compound for twenty? (Tamil.)

20.2 കാലാവസ്ഥ — “the state of time,” an echo of Spanish’s tiempo

Remember Spanish’s *tiempo*, one word for both “time” and “weather”? Malayalam reaches the same connection between time and weather — but builds it as a compound instead of reusing one word.

What to know first

കാലാവസ്ഥ (*kālāvastha*) = “weather” — built from:

- കാലം (*kālam*, “time”) — Sanskrit काल (*kāla*), “time,” also the name of the god **Kāla** (an epithet of Śiva/Yama as the personification of time).
- അവസ്ഥ (*avastha*, “state, condition”) — Sanskrit अवस्था (*avasthā*).

So *kālāvastha* literally means “**the state of time**” — a genuinely different construction than Spanish’s *tiempo*, but reaching for the exact same underlying idea: weather as bound up with time. Where Spanish just **reuses** its word for “time” to also mean “weather,” Malayalam **compounds** “time” with “state” to build a brand-new word for the same concept.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

മഴ പെയ്യുന്നു. — “It’s raining.” — literally “**rain is falling.**” (*māla peyyunnu.*)

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “*kālāvastha*” — weather, “the state of time”
- “*kālam*” — time, “*avastha*” — state
- “*māla peyyunnu*” — it’s raining, “rain is falling”

Before you move on

What are the two Sanskrit pieces of കാലാവസ്ഥ, and what does the whole word literally mean? (കാലം, “time,” + അവസ്ഥ, “state” — “**the state of time.**”) What earlier lesson does this echo, and how is the construction different? (Spanish’s *tiempo* — Spanish reuses ONE word for both senses; Malayalam **compounds** two separate words instead.) What word does Malayalam use for “rain”? (മഴ, *māla.*)

20.3 ദ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ധ — what does it do?

One character this time. Just one — and you have been saying it for pages without knowing which mark on the page it was.

Script you'll notice: ദ

ദ — *da*.

It is a **consonant**, and in this script a consonant is never bare: it comes with an *a* already in it. So it is not *d*, it is **da**.

You already say these, and every one of them has ദ somewhere inside it:

- നന്ദി *nandi* — thank you
- ദയവായി *dayavāyi* — please (dayavāyi)

Writing: ദ — copy what you see

Put your pen on ദ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ദ in the ones that have it

നന്ദി · ദയവായി · നമസ്കാരം

- *Trace it:* ദ three times, saying *da* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ദ once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ദ? What sound does it carry? (*da*.)
Name one word you already say that contains it.

Chapter 21

Dog and Cat

Modes: 🔄 voice (1) ✍ pen (1) 🔄 Hands-free start: first 1 of 2 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name a dog and a cat in Malayalam.

Say nāya on the shared Dravidian dog-root, then pūcha, which follows Tamil’s cat-word rather than Kannada’s.

21.1 നായ, പൂച്ച — matching Tamil closely on both counts

Malayalam keeps close company with its nearest cousin, Tamil, on both words this time — while still fitting into the honest, more fragmented Dravidian picture for “cat.”

What to know first

നായ (*nāya*, “dog”) continues the same solid, native **Proto-Dravidian** root as Kannada’s ನಾಯಿ (*nāyi*) and Tamil’s own word — no mystery here at all, unlike the tangled dog-words of Spanish, Hindi, and English.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

പൂച്ച (*pūcca*, “cat”) closely matches Tamil’s **everyday** word for cat — a different root from Kannada’s ಬೆಕ್ಕು (*bekku*, related instead to the word for “wildcat”) and Telugu’s పిల్లి (*pilli*, a separate Proto-Dravidian root of its own, most likely the source behind Sanskrit’s *biḍāla* and Hindi’s *billī*). So “cat” genuinely splits three ways across just these

four Dravidian languages, even though “dog” mostly agrees.

Your turn

- *Say it:* “nāya” — dog, same solid root as Kannada and Tamil
- *Say it:* “pūcca” — cat, matching Tamil’s everyday word closely
- *Recall:* say *cinṇaṁ kanni tulāṁ vṛścikaṁ dhanu makaraṁ kuṁbhaṁ mīṇaṁ mēṭaṁ iṭavaṁ mithunaṁ karkkatakāṁ*

Before you move on

Does നായ share Kannada’s *nāyi* root? (**Yes** — the same solid, native Proto-Dravidian root.) Does പൂച്ച match Kannada’s *bekku* or Tamil’s everyday cat-word? (**Tamil’s** — Kannada’s *bekku* and Telugu’s *pilli* both come from different roots entirely.)

21.2 സ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ഓ — what does it do?

One character this time. Just one — and you have been saying it for pages without knowing which mark on the page it was.

Script you’ll notice: സ

സ — *sa*.

It is a **consonant**, and in this script a consonant is never bare: it comes with an *a* already in it. So it is not *s*, it is **sa**.

You already say these, and every one of them has സ somewhere inside it:

- നമസ്കാരം *namaskāraṁ* — hello / greetings (namaskāraṁ — “a making of a bow”)
- സന്തോഷം *santōṣaṁ* — joy / pleased to meet you
- സുഖം *sukhaṁ* — well-being — and the reply “സുഖമാണ്”
- സാരമില്ല *sāramilla* — it doesn’t matter / no problem / you’re welcome

Writing: സ — copy what you see

Put your pen on സ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find സ in the ones that have it

നമസ്കാരം · സന്തോഷം · നന്ദി

- *Trace it:* സ three times, saying *sa* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find സ once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — സ? What sound does it carry? (*sa*.)
Name one word you already say that contains it.

Chapter 22

Green and Yellow

Modes: ⇄ voice (1) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 1 lesson.

By the end of this chapter: I can name green and yellow in Malayalam and say why the two come from unrelated roots.

*Say **paccha** beside Tamil **paccai** and **mañña** beside **mañcal**, and show they are not doublets of each other.*

22.1 പച്ച, മഞ്ഞ — matching Tamil twice over, by two different routes

Telugu’s green and yellow turned out to be one word wearing two faces. Malayalam’s green and yellow are a different story again — two completely separate native words, each one matching Tamil closely, just not matching *each other*.

What to know first

പച്ച (**paccha**, “green”) comes from **Proto-Dravidian** **pac-* — matching **Tamil**’s பச்சை (**paccai**) almost exactly, and the same root already seen in Kannada’s *hasiru* and Telugu’s *pacca*. No surprises here; this is the familiar family from the last two lessons.

Why it’s said this way

മഞ്ഞ (*mañña*, “yellow”) and മഞ്ഞൾ (*maññal*, “turmeric”) are a native **doublet pair**. This is a **completely different** Dravidian root from *pac-*, matching **Tamil**’s own turmeric/yellow pair, மஞ்சள்

(*mañcal*), closely. So here’s the honest shape of this arc so far: Kannada split green and yellow into two unrelated families (native vs. Sanskrit loan); Telugu kept them as doublets of the **same** native root; and Malayalam keeps them as **two separate** native Dravidian roots, each one independently matching its Tamil counterpart. No single pattern holds across all three languages — the honest answer is that each solved “green vs. yellow” its own way.

Your turn

- *Say it*: “പച്ച” — green, matching Tamil *paccai*
- *Say it*: “മഞ്ഞ” — yellow, matching Tamil *mañcal*, a separate root entirely
- *Say it*: the contrast — *paccha* and *mañña* are NOT doublets of each other, unlike Telugu’s *pacca/pasupu*
- *Recall*: say *ucca*

Before you move on

Does മഞ്ഞ (*mañña*, “yellow”) share a root with പച്ച (*paccha*, “green”)? (**No** — they are two separate native Dravidian roots.) What Tamil word does മഞ്ഞ closely match? (மஞ்சள், *mañcal*, “turmeric/yellow.”) Across Kannada, Telugu, and Malayalam, is there one single pattern for how green and yellow relate? (**No** — Kannada split them into native vs. Sanskrit-loan; Telugu made them doublets of one root; Malayalam keeps them as two separate native roots.)

Chapter 23

Day

Modes: ⇌ voice (2) ⇌ Hands-free start: all 2 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can use divasam for an everyday day in Malayalam and still recognise native nāl where it survives.

Find nāl alive inside nāle, oru nāl and pirannāl, and answer whether Sanskrit divasam erased it.

23.1 ദിവസം (divasam) — the everyday Sanskrit day-word

You already met Malayalam’s native word for “day” back in Chapter 4 — hiding inside “tomorrow.” This lesson gives it, and its Sanskrit rival, their own honest reckoning.

What to know first

ദിവസം (divasam) — “day” — is Malayalam’s common, everyday word for counting a day (as in മൂന്ന് ദിവസം, *mūnnu divasam*, “three days”). It’s a Sanskrit **tatsama**, borrowed whole from दिवस (*divasa*), which itself traces to **Proto-Indo-European** **dyew-* (“to shine”), via the Sanskrit root दिव् (*div*). That’s the **same ultimate PIE root** behind Hindi/Kannada’s दिन/ದಿನ (*dina*) and Latin’s own *diēs* — but be careful here: *divasa* and *dina* are **two different Sanskrit formations** off that shared root (one built with an *-asa* suffix, one with Sanskrit’s own *-nó-* formation), not the same word wearing two scripts. Same root, different branch — the *din/diēs* pattern, replaying itself one level deeper, inside Sanskrit.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

Malayalam also has ദിനം (**dinam**) — the **exact same** Sanskrit tatsama word as Kannada’s plain, everyday *dina*. But in Malayalam, **dinam** is the more **literary, formal** alternate (think ജന്മദിനം, *janmadinam*, “birthday,” the modern calque-style term) — **divasaṁ** does the everyday counting work instead.

Your turn

- *Say it*: “divasaṁ” — “day,” the everyday counting word
- *Say it*: “dinam” — the same Sanskrit word as Kannada’s *dina*, but formal here
- *Recall*: say *pātirā*, then read മണി

Before you move on

What PIE root does ദിവസം ultimately share with Hindi/Kannada’s *dina* and Latin’s *diēs*? (**dyew-*, “to shine” — though *divasa* and *dina* are different Sanskrit formations off it, not the same word.) Which is the everyday counting word? (**divasaṁ**.) Which is more literary or formal? (**dinam**.)

23.2 നാൾ — the native day-word that narrowed its job

ദിവസം counts ordinary days and ദിനം writes formally. But Malayalam’s native day-word never disappeared—you met it long ago inside “tomorrow.”

What to know first

നാൾ (*nāl*) means “day” and descends from Proto-Dravidian **nāl*, cognate with Tamil நாள் and Kannada ನಾಳ. Chapter 4 already gave you നാളെ (*nāle*, “tomorrow”), with the native day-word still visible inside.

The Sanskrit loan ദിവസം took over ordinary counting, but നാൾ narrowed rather than vanished. ഒരു നാൾ (*oru nāl*, “one day”) remains natural in storytelling, and the word stays productive in പിറന്നാൾ (*pirannāl*),

“birthday,” literally “day of birth.” That traditional compound stands beside the newer Sanskrit-style ജന്മദിനം (*janmadīnam*).

Three words therefore carry three honest jobs: *divasam* counts, *dinam* is formal, and native *nāl* tells stories and marks birthdays. This echoes Kannada’s native *hagalu*: borrowing narrowed a native word’s domain without erasing it.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *nāle* — tomorrow, with *nāl* inside
- *oru nāl* — one day, narrative register
- *pirannāl* — birthday, day of birth

Before you move on

Has Sanskrit **divasam** erased native നാൾ? (No.) Where does *nāl* live now? (Inside tomorrow, in narrative “one day,” and in the living compound for birthday.)

Chapter 24

Night

Modes: ⇄ voice (2) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 2 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say night in Malayalam with *rāthri* and tell literary *iravū* apart from everyday *iruḷ*, ‘darkness’.

Sort iravū from iruḷ by the job each one still does in the modern language.

24.1 രാത്രി (rātri) — night, already hiding inside midnight

Last lesson’s *divasam* had three words doing three honest jobs. This word’s family is smaller, but the split is just as real — and one piece of it, you’ve technically already heard.

What to know first

രാത്രി (rātri) — “night” — is a Sanskrit **tatsama**. You’ve likely already met a piece of it: പാതിരാ (pātirā, “midnight,” Chapter 17) is built from പാതി (pāthi, “half”) fused with what’s most plausibly a **shortened form** of this very word — “rā” standing in for the whole of *rātri* (Chapter 17 itself didn’t spell out which word was being shortened, but the parallel Tamil compound, *pāti-y-irāttiri*, points the same way). This lesson gives it its own, full standing.

Why it's said this way

Here's the honest echo across the family: just like Hindi's own रात (*raat*, ultimately from the same Sanskrit रात्रि), Malayalam's *rātri* traces to **Proto-Indo-European** **h₁reh₁-* (“to rest”) — a **completely different** PIE root from Latin's *nox* (**nók^wts*). Two Indo-European languages, two words for “night,” that **look** like they might be old cousins — but genuinely **aren't**. Same false-cognate story, now confirmed across a second Indo-Aryan-rooted borrowing.

Your turn

- *Say it*: “*rātri*” — “night,” already hiding, shortened, inside *pātirā*
- *Say it*: the honest PIE echo — *h₁reh₁-*, “to rest,” like Hindi's *raat*, **NOT** related to Latin's *nox*
- *Recall*: say *patinonnū* — *irupatū*

Before you move on

Where did you already, technically, meet a piece of രാത്രി before this lesson? (Shortened to “*rā*” inside പാതിരാ, *pātirā*, “midnight,” Chapter 17.) Does *rātri*'s PIE root match Latin *nox*'s? (**No** — **h₁reh₁-* “to rest,” a completely different root, the same false-cognate pattern already seen with Hindi's *raat*.)

24.2 ഇരവ് / ഇരുൾ — two native words, two jobs

രാത്രി is the ordinary Sanskrit night-word. Malayalam also kept two native Dravidian words, but they do not compete with it in the same way.

What to know first

- ഇരവ് (*iravū*) is cognate with Tamil இரவு (*iravu*) and is traced by one source to Proto-Dravidian **cira*, “darkness.” It survives mainly as a **literary or classical-register** synonym for “night.” Poetry is a more likely home for it than everyday conversation.

- ഇരുൾ (*irul*) descends from Proto-Dravidian **cirVl* and belongs to the pan-Dravidian family Kannada ಇರುಳು, Tamil இருள், and Telugu ఇరులు. It remains current in modern Malayalam—a 2021 film is titled *Irul*—but its ordinary sense is **darkness**, not night as a time period.

This is not one native night-word simply pushed into archaism. It is two native words carrying different pieces of രാത്രി's semantic space: one formal and poetic, the other common but narrower.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *iravũ* — literary night
- *irul* — current darkness
- related ideas, different modern jobs

Before you move on

Are ഇരവ് and ഇരുൾ interchangeable everyday words for night? (No.) Which is literary “night”? (*iravũ*.) Which is current “darkness”? (*irul*.)

Chapter 25

Good Night

Modes: 🗣️ voice (1) ✍️ pen (1) 🗣️ Hands-free start: first 1 of 2 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can wish someone good night in Malayalam with śubha rāthri.

Say śubha rāthri as 'auspicious night', and mark the English code-switching claim as thinly sourced and not unique to Malayalam.

25.1 ശുഭ രാത്രി (śubha rātri) — “good night,” and a pattern seen before

You already have *rātri*. One more Sanskrit word, shared with Hindi, Kannada, and Telugu, completes Malayalam’s “good night” — and this lesson’s honest twist is one you’ve technically seen before, just in a different language.

What to know first

ശുഭ രാത്രി (śubha rātri) — “good night” — literally “auspicious night.” Both pieces are Sanskrit **tatsama**: രാത്രി (*rātri*, “night,” already met last lesson) plus ശുഭ (*śubha*, “auspicious,” from root śubh, “to be beautiful,” ultimately PIE **kewbʰ-* — the same word, the same root, already verified for the Hindi, Kannada, and Telugu siblings of this exact arc).

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

Here’s the honest twist, hedged deliberately: some sources describe modern Malayalam speakers, especially in casual settings, **code-switching to English** “good night” rather than saying ശുഭ രാത്രി aloud — treating it more as the standard, correct-but-formal translation than an everyday spoken phrase. But this lesson isn’t presenting that as a fresh Malayalam discovery. The **exact same claim**, sourced from similarly thin blogs and forum posts, is also made for **Telugu**, and there too it is genuinely **unclear** whether the pattern is Telugu-specific or something broader. Seeing the same claim turn up again for Malayalam **strengthens the suspicion that this is a broader South Asian pattern** (or simply a sourcing artifact — the languages that happen to get commented on in casual sources), not a language-specific trait worth treating as a genuine discovery each time. Either way, *śubha rātri* itself remains perfectly correct, understood Malayalam.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “śubha rātri” — “good night,” literally “auspicious night”
- śubha’s own root — śubh, “to be beautiful” → “auspicious” — the same root already met for Hindi, Kannada, and Telugu
- the honest twist — this code-switching claim isn’t uniquely Malayalam’s; the same weakly-sourced claim already appeared for Telugu

Before you move on

What does ശുഭ രാത്രി literally mean? (“**Auspicious night.**”) Is the “Malayalam speakers code-switch to English instead” claim a fresh discovery in this lesson? (**No** — the identical claim, similarly thinly sourced, is also made about **Telugu**, suggesting a broader pattern or a sourcing artifact, not a Malayalam-specific fact.) Does this affect whether *śubha rātri* itself is correct? (**No** — it’s perfectly correct and understood Malayalam, whatever its actual spoken frequency.)

25.2 ੜ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ੜ — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has been sitting in front of you on pages you have already read.

Script you'll notice: ੜ

ੜ — *bha*.

It is a **consonant**, and in this script a consonant is never bare: it comes with an *a* already in it. So it is not *bh*, it is **bha**.

Its sound is a *b* with a puff of breath after it — **bha**, not *ba*. Two words already in your hands are built on it, and both come from the Sanskrit layer, which is the pattern this letter keeps.

- ੜੁਬ ੜ *śubha* — good, auspicious — the first half of the good-night wish on the page before this one
- ੜੁਮ ੜ ੜ *kumbham* — the month, met with the calendar

Say each one and listen for the breath: *śu-bha*, *kum-bham*.

Writing: ੜ — copy what you see

Put your pen on ੜ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look*: at these words, and find ੜ in the ones that have it

ੜੁਬ · ੜੁਮ ੜ · ੜ

- *Trace it*: ੜ three times, saying *bha* as you finish each one

- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find **ᄃ** once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — **ᄃ**? What sound does it carry? (*bha.*)
Name one word you already say that contains it.

Chapter 26

Morning

Modes: ⇨ voice (1) ⇨ Hands-free start: all 1 lesson.

By the end of this chapter: I can say morning in Malayalam with *rāvile* and hear the night-word hidden inside it.

*Say *rāvile*, pull *rāvũ* ‘night’ out of it, and place *prabhātami* beside it as the Sanskrit alternative.*

26.1 രാവിലെ (*rāvile*) — “morning,” built from “night”

Kannada’s morning word means “the shining.” Telugu’s means “rise.” Malayalam’s most common morning word means something stranger on its face: night.

What to know first

രാവിലെ (*rāvile*) — “morning” — is, per Wiktionary, a compound: രാവ് (*rāvũ*) plus the suffixes **-il** and **-e**. Here’s the honest surprise: രാവ് shares its root — not its exact form — with the word already met in Chapter 24, ഇരവ് (*iravũ*), there a **literary-register synonym for “night”** itself. Wiktionary confirms both as cognates, both tracing to **Proto-Dravidian** **cira* (“darkness”) — a cognate doublet within Malayalam, not literally one word in two spellings. So Malayalam’s everyday word for “morning” is, transparently, built from **night** plus locative-ish suffixes — not from light, dawn, or rising, the strategies Kannada’s ಬೆಳಗ್ಗೆ (“the shining”) and Telugu’s ఉదయം (Sanskrit “rise”) both reach for instead.

Why it's said this way

No source spells out **why** “at/in the night” came to mean “morning” specifically — it’s a plausible semantic path (perhaps “the night just ending,” the pre-dawn hours) rather than one directly documented step by step. Treat the **morphological composition** as confirmed (Wiktionary is explicit about the *rāvũ+il+e* breakdown); treat the **semantic mechanism** as a reasonable but unconfirmed inference, not a settled fact.

Why it's said this way

Malayalam keeps two other words for “morning” too. പ്രഭാതം (*prabhātam*) is a Sanskrit **tatsama** sharing its root — **prabhāta**, “to shine, become bright” — with Telugu’s own సుప్రభాతం (*suprabhātam*, Telugu’s own morning greeting) — a genuine cross-language echo. പുലർച്ച (*pularcca*) is native Dravidian, but be honest about its etymology: one database entry links it to a root meaning “to subsist, live,” which may or may not be the same root behind its “dawn” sense — treat that specific connection as unconfirmed, not settled.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “rāvile” — “morning,” built from *rāvũ* (“night”) + locative suffixes
- the honest surprise — a cognate doublet of the night-word already met as *iravũ* (Chapter 24), same root, now doing morning’s job
- *prabhātam* — same Sanskrit root as Telugu’s *suprabhātam*

Before you move on

What is രാവിലെ literally built from? (രാവ് — “night” — plus locative suffixes *-il/-e*; a cognate doublet, same root, as ഇരവ് met in Chapter 24 — not literally the same word.) Is the exact reason “night” came to mean “morning” fully documented? (**No** — the compound itself is confirmed, but the semantic shift is a plausible, unconfirmed inference.) What root does പ്രഭാതം share with Telugu’s సుప్రభాతం? (**prabhāta** — the same root behind Telugu’s సుప్రభాతం.)

Chapter 27

Evening

Modes: ⇨ voice (1) ⇨ Hands-free start: all 1 lesson.

By the end of this chapter: I can say evening in Malayalam with vaikunnērami, ‘latening time’.

Say vaikunnērami, trace it to vaikuka ‘to get late’, and flag that sources disagree on whether it also covers afternoon.

27.1 വൈകുന്നേരം (vaikunnērami) — “evening,” built from a verb meaning “to get late”

Telugu reached for Sanskrit to name the evening. Malayalam’s most common word takes a completely different route — an everyday verb, not a borrowed noun.

What to know first

വൈകുന്നേരം (vaikunnērami) — “evening” — is, per Wiktionary, a compound: വൈക് (vaikū) + -ഉം (-um) + നേരം (nērami, “time”), literally “latening time.” നേരം is itself confirmed native **Proto-Dravidian** (cognate Tamil நேரம்), not a Sanskrit borrowing — so unlike Telugu’s Sanskrit సాయంత్రం, this whole compound is native Dravidian, start to finish. The വൈക് root plausibly connects to an everyday Malayalam verb, വൈകുക (vaikuka), confirmed “to get late” — though be honest that this specific link is the author’s own reasonable inference, not something Wiktionary’s compound entry states outright.

Why it's said this way

Here's a real tension, not smoothed over: Wiktionary's own entry lists **both** “afternoon” **and** “evening” as senses of this single word. But two independently-fetched phrasebook sources (ling-app.com, talkpal.ai) draw a cleaner line — **evening** is വൈകുന്നേരം, while **afternoon** gets its own, separate compound built on ഉച്ച (already met, Chapter 17, “noon”) plus കഴിഞ്ഞ് (*kazhinju*, “passed, gone by”). This project's discipline is to flag genuine disagreement rather than quietly pick whichever source is more convenient — so treat the afternoon/evening boundary here as **genuinely blurry** in the dictionary sense, even though the two everyday phrasebook sources agree on a cleaner practical split.

Your turn

- *Say it*: “vaikunnēram” — “evening,” literally “latening time”
- *Say it*: the everyday verb root — vaikuka, “to get late”
- *Say it*: the honest tension — Wiktionary blurs afternoon/evening; phrasebooks split them cleanly
- *Recall*: say *nāya*, *pūcca*, then read പച്ച, മഞ്ഞ

Before you move on

What does വൈകുന്നേരം literally mean, and what verb is it plausibly built from? (“**Latening time**” — from വൈകുക, “to get late.”) Do all sources agree on where “afternoon” ends and “evening” begins for this word? (**No** — Wiktionary lists it as covering both senses; phrasebook sources instead draw a clean line, treating afternoon as a separate compound.) Is വൈകുന്നേരം a Sanskrit borrowing, like Telugu's సాయంత్రം? (**No** — it's a native Dravidian compound, built from an everyday verb and a native “time” word, നേരം.)

Chapter 28

Afternoon

Modes: ⇄ voice (1) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 1 lesson.

By the end of this chapter: I can say afternoon in Malayalam as uchakaliññ – literally ‘noon having passed’.

Build uchakaliññ from ucha plus kaliyuka, and contrast it with Telugu, which widened its noon-word instead.

28.1 ഉച്ചകഴിഞ്ഞ് (uccakaliññũ) — “noon, having passed”

Telugu let its noon-word quietly widen to also mean “afternoon.” Malayalam solves the same problem with a completely different strategy: it builds a new phrase instead.

What to know first

ഉച്ചകഴിഞ്ഞ് (uccakaliññũ) — “afternoon” — is a transparent **two-word phrase**, not a single dictionary headword (no Wiktionary entry exists for the compound as a whole). It’s built from ഉച്ച (already met, Chapter 17, “noon”) plus കഴിഞ്ഞ്, the **past converb form** of കഴിയുക (*kaliyuka*), itself Wiktionary-confirmed **Proto-Dravidian** **kazi* (“to be over, spent, finished”). Be honest about the citation: Wiktionary’s own conjugation line shows only the finite past tense, കഴിഞ്ഞു (*kaliññu*) — not this converb form directly. The converb is the grammatically correct choice for chaining into a compound like this one, but treat the exact written form as

a reasonable grammatical inference, not a directly Wiktionary-sourced citation. Put together: “**noon having passed**” — afternoon is, quite literally, the time after noon is done.

Why it’s said this way

Here’s the honest structural contrast: Telugu’s own afternoon word (మధ్యాహ్నం) is the exact **same word** as its “noon,” simply **widened** to also cover “afternoon” — one word, stretched. Malayalam does something structurally different: ഉച്ച itself stays put, meaning only “noon,” and a **second word** — കഴിഞ്ഞ, “passed” — gets bolted on to build a new phrase for “afternoon.” Same problem (naming the stretch of time after noon), two genuinely different solutions: semantic widening in Telugu, compositional phrase-building in Malayalam.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “uccakaliññũ” — “afternoon,” literally “noon having passed”
- the verb behind it — kalīyuka, “to be over, spent” — Proto-Dravidian *kazī*
- the honest contrast — Telugu widens the same noon-word; Malayalam builds a new phrase on top of it

Before you move on

What does ഉച്ചകഴിഞ്ഞ literally mean? (“**Noon having passed**” — ഉച്ച, “noon,” plus the past tense of കഴിയുക, “to be over, spent.”) Is ഉച്ചകഴിഞ്ഞ a single dictionary word, like ഉച്ച itself? (No — it’s a transparent two-word phrase; no Wiktionary entry exists for the compound as a whole.) How does Malayalam’s strategy for naming “afternoon” differ from Telugu’s? (**Telugu widens its existing noon-word’s meaning; Malayalam instead builds a new phrase, keeping the noon-word unchanged.**)

Chapter 29

Good Morning

Modes: ⇄ voice (1) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 1 lesson.

By the end of this chapter: I can greet someone in the morning in Malayalam with suprabhātani.

Say suprabhātani, split su- from prabhātani, and show it is NOT built on śubha the way good night is.

29.1 സുപ്രഭാതം (suprabhātani) — Malayalam’s real “good morning,” a familiar word wearing a new hat

You might expect Malayalam’s “good morning” to pair ML-C25’s “auspicious” word with ML-C26’s morning word. It doesn’t — Malayalam reaches for a completely different Sanskrit “good,” and for a word you’ve technically already half-met.

What to know first

സുപ്രഭാതം (suprabhātani) — “good morning” — is Malayalam’s actual, most common morning greeting: two independently-fetched sources confirm it: one states it’s used in **both formal and informal** contexts, the second separately calls it “the most general greeting” for good morning — genuine corroboration, not a single source’s claim taken on faith. Here’s the honest surprise: it is **not** built on ശുഭ (ML-C25’s “auspicious,” the word behind Malayalam’s own “good night”) at all. Instead, it’s built from the Sanskrit **prefix su-** (“good”) fused directly onto പ്രഭാതം — already met,

Chapter 26, as an alternative Malayalam word for “morning.” Two genuinely different Sanskrit “good” morphemes: ശുഭ is a standalone adjective; **su-** here is a bound prefix that only ever attaches to another word.

Why it’s said this way

Here’s the honest cross-language twist: സുപ്രഭാതం is the **exact same Sanskrit tatsama word** as Telugu’s own సుప్రభాతం — same su-prefix, same ప్రభాత/ *prabhāta* root. But the two languages hand it **opposite jobs**. In Malayalam, it’s the **primary**, most commonly used morning greeting. In Telugu, it’s only a **secondary** alternative — Telugu’s primary greeting, శుభోదయం, is built on a completely different Sanskrit root (*udaya*, “rise,” not *prabhāta*). Same borrowed word, opposite roles across two closely related languages.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “suprabhātam” — “good morning,” su- (“good”) + prabhāta (“shine, dawn,” ML-C26)
- the honest surprise — NOT built on śubha; a different Sanskrit “good” morpheme entirely
- the cross-language inversion — Malayalam’s primary greeting is Telugu’s secondary alternative

Before you move on

Is സുപ്രഭാതం built on ശുഭ, ML-C25’s “auspicious” word? (**No** — it’s built on the Sanskrit prefix su-, a different “good” morpheme, fused onto പ്രഭാതం, ML-C26’s alternative morning word.) Is സുപ്രഭാതం the primary morning greeting in both Malayalam and Telugu? (**No** — it’s PRIMARY in Malayalam but only a SECONDARY alternative in Telugu, where శుభోదయం — built on a different root — is primary.) Is the “used in both formal and informal contexts” claim as shaky as Telugu’s own morning-greeting claim? (**No** — it’s confirmed by TWO independently-fetched sources, a genuinely stronger evidentiary footing than resting on just one.)

Chapter 30

Good Evening

Modes: ⇄ voice (1) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 1 lesson.

By the end of this chapter: I can greet someone in the evening in Malayalam with śubha sāyāhnam.

Say śubha sāyāhnam, note it is built on the poetic sāyāhnam rather than native vaikunnēram, and follow sāya back to PIE.

30.1 ശുഭ സായാഹ്നം (śubha sāyāhnam) — “good evening,” a different evening-word than expected

You might expect this greeting to pair śubha with the evening-word you already know. It doesn’t — Malayalam reaches for a completely different word instead, one with a poetic edge.

What to know first

ശുഭ സായാഹ്നം (śubha sāyāhnam) — “good evening” — is confirmed real by a directly-fetched source, used “**from late afternoon until sunset.**” It’s built from ശുഭ (ML-C25, “auspicious”) plus സായാഹ്നം (*sāyāhnam*, “evening, eventide”). Here’s the honest surprise: this is **not** built on വൈകുണ്ഠം, the native word already met in Chapter 27, at all. സായാഹ്നം is a **completely separate** word — a Sanskrit **tatsama**, which Wiktionary’s own part-of-speech label calls “**poetic.**” That’s a real, independently-checkable signal (not an unverifiable blog claim) that this

particular greeting likely leans formal or literary, even though the phrase itself is confirmed correct and genuinely used.

Why it's said this way

സായാഹ്നം is, per a Sanskrit dictionary, a compound of साय (“end”) plus अह्न (“day”) — the same “-ahna” day-part suffix already met in words like *madhyāhna* and *aparāhna*. Following the etymology one hop further, Wiktionary’s own साय entry explicitly confirms this root traces to **Proto-Indo-European** **seh₁-* (“long, lasting”), directly naming सायम् (*sāyam* — Telugu’s own root) and **Latin** *sērus* as cognates. So this is a genuinely, properly-verified shared ancestor with Telugu’s సాయంత్రం — the same striking PIE chain to Latin *sērus*, French *soir*, and Italian *sera* — not merely a plausible guess, but a confirmed cognate, reached by chaining through two Wiktionary pages rather than stopping at the first.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “śubha sāyāhnaṁ” — “good evening,” confirmed real, used from late afternoon until sunset
- the honest surprise — NOT built on vaikunnēraṁ; a separate, Wiktionary-labeled “poetic” Sanskrit word instead
- the confirmed echo — sāyāhnaṁ’s साय root genuinely shares the PIE *seh₁-*/*Latin sērus* ancestry behind Telugu’s సాయంత్రం

Before you move on

Is ശുഭ സായാഹ്നം built on വൈകുണ്ഠനരം, ML-C27’s native evening word? (No — സായാഹ്നം is a completely separate Sanskrit tatsama.) What does Wiktionary’s own part-of-speech label for സായാഹ്നം suggest about its register? (“Poetic” — a real, checkable signal it likely skews formal or literary.) Is it confirmed that സായാഹ്നം shares that spectacular PIE root with Telugu’s సాయంత్రం? (Yes — Wiktionary’s separate साय entry directly confirms the same PIE *seh₁-* ancestry, naming *sāyam* and *Latin sērus* as cognates — a genuinely verified shared root, reached by

following the etymology one hop further.)

Chapter 31

Good Afternoon

Modes: 🗣️ voice (1) 👁️ eyes (1) ✍️ pen (1) 🗣️ Hands-free start: first 1 of 3 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can greet someone in the afternoon in Malayalam with śubha madhyāhnam, and say how it differs from the everyday afternoon word.

Line up the three sister languages’ everyday afternoon words and show where all three converge on śubha + madhyāhna.

31.1 ശുഭ മധ്യാഹ്നം (śubha madhyāhnam) — formal good afternoon

Morning broke the pattern entirely. Evening kept the pattern but swapped in an unexpected word. This final greeting brings a different kind of surprise: a word you haven’t met, that turns out to connect Malayalam right back to Kannada and Telugu.

What to know first

ശുഭ മധ്യാഹ്നം (śubha madhyāhnam) — “good afternoon” — is confirmed, by a directly-fetched source, as a genuinely **formal** greeting: “**mainly used in official or ceremonial settings**” and “**not as commonly used in daily conversation.**” (A suspiciously precise “fewer than 1%” statistic turned up in an initial search summary for this claim — but it couldn’t be traced to either page actually fetched, so it’s deliberately left out here as an apparent confabulation; the real, hedged qualitative finding

stands on its own.) It’s built from ശുഭ (ML-C25) plus മധ്യാഹ്നം (*madhyāhnam*, “noon”) — which Wiktionary confirms is a direct **synonym** of ML-C17’s ഉച്ച. Here’s the honest surprise: Malayalam had this “middle”-based noon-word all along — ML-C17 simply didn’t highlight it, teaching ഉച്ച (“peak, high”) instead. And this greeting is **not** built on ML-C28’s ഉച്ചകഴിഞ്ഞ് compound (the actual TIME-AFTERNOON phrase already taught) at all.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “śubha madhyāhnam” — “good afternoon,” a formal, ceremonial-register greeting
- the honest surprise — madhyāhnam is a genuine synonym of ucca, Malayalam’s own “noon” word, just not the one taught first

Before you move on

Is ശുഭ മധ്യാഹ്നം built on ML-C28’s ഉച്ചകഴിഞ്ഞ്? (No — it’s built on മധ്യാഹ്നം, a genuine Wiktionary-confirmed synonym of ML-C17’s ഉച്ച, not the TIME-AFTERNOON compound.) Is the “fewer than 1% use this” statistic something this lesson confirms? (No — it couldn’t be traced to any directly-fetched source and is deliberately excluded; only the hedged “formal, not common in daily conversation” finding is asserted.)

31.2 ഉൗ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ഋ — what does it do?

One character this time. One only. It has not been on a page yet: it arrives with the word on the next one.

Script you’ll notice: ഉൗ

ഉൗ — *ū*.

It is an **independent vowel** — the shape this vowel takes when a word *begins* with it, rather than the sign it becomes inside a word.

You already read its short twin. ഉ is *u*; ഉൗ is the same vowel held longer, $\bar{u}$, and the shape says so — the short one grows a tail.

- ഉ *u* — the short one, read since the farewell chapter
- ഉൗ $\bar{u}$ — a meal: the long one, and the word that will put this letter to work

Length is the whole difference, in the sound and on the page.

Writing: ഉൗ — copy what you see

Put your pen on ഉൗ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ഉൗ in the ones that have it

ഉൗൺ · ഉ · ഉൗ

- *Trace it:* ഉൗ three times, saying $\bar{u}$ as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ഉൗ once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ഉൗ? What sound does it carry? ($\bar{u}$.)
Which of the two is longer — ഉ or ഉൗ? (ഉൗ.)

31.3 One greeting, three afternoon strategies

Malayalam's formal greeting uses ശുഭ + മധ്യാഹ്നം. Kannada and Telugu land on the same phrase—but their ordinary afternoon words took three different routes.

What to know first

language	formal afternoon greeting
Malayalam	ശുഭ മധ്യാഹ്നം
Kannada	ಶುಭ ಮಧ್ಯಾಹ್ನ
Telugu	శుభ మధ్యాహ్నం

All three share the Sanskrit *śubha* + *madhyāhna* structure. That shared greeting is striking because the languages’ everyday time words diverge:

- **Telugu** widened its *madhya*-based noon-word so the same word also covers afternoon.
- **Kannada** built a separate Sanskrit tatsama, *ಅಪರಾಹ್ನ* (*aparāhna*, *apara* + *ahna*), rather than widening *madhyāhna*.
- **Malayalam** built *ഉച്ചകഴിഞ്ഞു*, the unrelated *ucca* “noon” plus “having passed.”

So there are three genuinely different everyday strategies, not a simple two-versus-one split. At the formal greeting layer, all three converge on the same borrowed building blocks.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- the shared greeting structure — *śubha* + *madhyāhna*
- Telugu — widening
- Kannada — a separate *aparāhna* word
- Malayalam — “noon having passed”

Script check — the letters of this chapter

Cover the romanizations. Find each letter once in the Malayalam above, then say the word it sits in.

- *ഉ* — *ഉ* *ū*, the long twin of *ഉ*
- *Look*: at each letter, then find it in the word beside it

Before you move on

Do the three languages share one ordinary afternoon-word strategy?
(**No.**) Where do they converge? (**In the formal greeting, all
using śubha + madhyāhna.**)

Chapter 32

The Core Verbs

Modes: ⇄ voice (6) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 6 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can build a Malayalam verb as stem plus one ending with no person marking at all, swap that ending for past, future or mood, and say why 'I know Malayalam' puts me in the dative instead of the subject slot.

Say എനിക്ക് മലയാളം അറിയാം, name the two slots that built *irikkunnu*, *pōkunnu* and *kāṇunnu*, and explain why this verb moves the knower out of the subject slot altogether.

32.1 ഉണ്ട് (uṇṭŭ) — “there is,” and the machine inside every Malayalam verb

Thirty-one chapters of words. Now the engine room. English makes one verb, “to be,” do three jobs. Malayalam uses three words.

What to know first

ഉണ്ട് — *uṇṭŭ* — there is, there are; [someone] has

ഇരിക്കുക — *irikkuka* — to be somewhere, to stay, to sit

Chapter 2 gave you ആണ് (*āṇŭ*), the “is” that links two nouns: *enre pēr Arun āṇŭ*, “my name is Arun.” ഉണ്ട് does a different job — **existing** and **having**: *enikkŭ oru sahōdaran uṇṭŭ*, “to-me one brother there-is,” which is

how Malayalam says “I have a brother.” ഇരിക്കുക is being in a **place**: *nān vīṭṭil irikkunnu*, “I am at home.”

Identity, existence, location — and none stands in for another.

The letters in this word

ഉ (the standing vowel *u*) + ണ് + ൾ → ഉണ്ട്. Both consonants are retroflex — tongue curled back — and both have had their vowel stripped, so the word trails off on a half-swallowed *ũ*: *uṇ-ṭũ*. ഇരിക്കുക runs *i-rik-ku-ka*, with the doubled ക held long.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

Both are native Dravidian, from the oldest layer, and the family split them between its daughters: **Tamil** kept இரு (*iru*), “be, stay”; **Kannada** kept the same word, ಇರು (*iru*); **Telugu** kept the other one, ఉండు (*undu*). Malayalam kept **both**, and gave each a job.

Grammar Lens: two pieces, where Tamil has three

English changes a verb with words **around** it: *I am*, *I was*, *I will be*. Malayalam glues a piece **onto the end**:

ഇരിക്ക് + ഉന്നു → ഇരിക്കുന്നു

irikk- (stay) + *-unnu* (happening now) → *irikkunnu*

Stem, then tense. Two slots, and that is the whole machine. Tamil glues on a **third** piece naming who acts: *iru* + *-kkir-* + *-ēn* (I) → *irukkirēn*, “I am,” against *irukkirān*, “he is.” Malayalam threw that slot away. *Nān irikkunnu*, *nā irikkunnu*, *avan irikkunnu* — the verb never moves. Chapter 5 showed this with one verb; it holds for **every** Malayalam verb, and for no sister.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- the three jobs — “āṇũ” is, “uṇṭũ” there-is, “irikkuka” be somewhere
- “enikkũ oru saḥōdaran uṇṭũ” — I have a brother

- the two pieces — “irikk ... unnu”
- one verb, three people — “ñān, nī, avan ... irikkunnu”

Before you move on

Which be-word does Malayalam use for having something? (ഉണ്ട്, *uṇṭū*.) What are the two pieces of *irikkunnu*? (**Stem and tense**; there is no third piece.) How does the verb change between “I stay” and “he stays”? (**It does not.**) Next: the piece that carries time.

32.2 പോകുക (pōkuka) — “to go,” and the piece that carries time

Stem, then tense. Hold the stem still and swap the second piece. That is the whole of Malayalam tense, and it is a shorter list than you expect.

What to know first

പോകുക — *pōkuka* — to go

Chapter 4 met this verb in passing, on the way to a farewell. Here it goes to work. The dictionary form is the stem പോക്- (*pōk-*) plus -ഉക (-*uka*), the ending that means “to ____.”

when	Malayalam	the ending
now	പോകുന്നു <i>pōkunnu</i>	- <i>unnu</i>
already	പോയി <i>pōyi</i>	- <i>i</i>
not yet	പോകും <i>pōkum</i>	- <i>um</i>

You have said the middle one already: the goodbye പോയി വരാം (*pōyi varām*) opens with *pōyi*, “having gone.”

The letters in this word

പോ (*pa* wearing the long-*ō* sign) + കു (*ku*) + ക (*ka*) → പോകുക.
The *ō* is long and round; let it run.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

പോ- is native Dravidian, so old it has barely moved: Tamil போ (pō), Telugu పోవు (pōvu), the same verb.

Kannada’s everyday word is ಹೋಗು (hōgu), and that *h* is no different root. Old Dravidian *p*- softened to *h*- in Kannada — “ten” is Malayalam പത്ത് (pattŭ) against Kannada ಹತ್ತು (hattu), the very same swap.

Grammar Lens: three forms are the whole conjugation

In most languages a tense is a **list**. English has *I go* / *he goes*. Tamil, Malayalam’s closest sister, needs an ending for every person: *pōgīrēn* (“I go”), *pōgīrāy* (“you go”), *pōgīrān* (“he goes”).

Malayalam’s present tense is one word long. *Ñān pōkunnu*, *nī pōkunnu*, *avar pōkunnu* — I, you, they, and *pōkunnu* every time. So those three forms are not the start of a conjugation. **They are the whole of it.** That is the bargain. Nothing to memorise on the verb — and the pronoun in front can never be dropped, since it is now the only thing telling you who went.

Your turn

- *Say it*: “pōkuka” — to go
- *Say it*: the three times — “pōkunnu ... pōyi ... pōkuni”
- *Look*: at the three on the page — പോകുന്നു, പോയി, പോകും
- *Say it*: the pair that shares one sound-law — “pattŭ ... hattu”, “pō ... hōgu”
- *Say it*: four people, one verb — “ñān, nī, avan, avar ... pōkunnu”
- *Recall*: read ദിവസം

Before you move on

Say “I will go.” (*Ñān pōkumī*) — and find it written: ഞാൻ പോകും. How many words are in this verb’s whole Malayalam present tense? (**One** — *pōkunnu*, for every person.) Is Kannada’s *hōgu* a different root from *pō*? (**No** — the same old *p* softened to *h*.) Next: the one place a Malayalam verb can still surprise you.

32.3 വരുക (varuka) — “to come,” and a past that reshapes the stem

Pōkuka took its endings without a fuss. Its lifelong partner does not — and the difference sits in exactly one of the three tenses.

What to know first

വരുക — *varuka* — to come

The stem is വരു- (*varu-*), and the command is shorter still: വാ! (*vā!*), “come!” (Chapter 4 met the dictionary form in its other common spelling, വരിക, *varika*; both name this verb.)

Go and come are inseparable here. The everyday goodbye പോയി വരാം (*pōyi varām*) is the two verbs holding hands — “having gone, I’ll come” — and Malayalam has no plain farewell that leaves the coming back out.

The letters in this word

വ (*va*) + രു (*ru*) + ക (*ka*) → വരുക, three light beats. In the past form വന്നു (*vannu*) the ന is a doubled *n*, held long: *van-nu*, not *vanu*.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

Native Dravidian, and every sister kept it — each reshaping the front of the word. **Tamil** has வா (*vā*) as the command and வரு- (*varu-*) as the stem; **Kannada** has ಬಾ (*bā*); **Telugu** has రా (*rā*).

V, b, r: three regular reworkings of one old word, not three verbs. And Malayalam’s *vā* / *varu-* pairing is Tamil’s exactly, down to the two shapes — which is what “closest sister” means in practice.

Grammar Lens: where Malayalam keeps its irregularity

Line the two verbs up:

tense	go	come
now	<i>pōkunnu</i>	<i>varunnu</i>
already	<i>pōyi</i>	<i>vannu</i>
not yet	<i>pōkuni</i>	<i>varuni</i>

Present and future are built the same way for both: stem, plus *-unnu* or *-uni*. The past is not — *varu-* collapses into *vann-*, and no rule would have told you so.

That is Malayalam’s whole irregularity budget, spent in one place. Once a verb’s **past** is learned, nothing else about it can catch you out, because the missing person slot means there is no second, third or plural form waiting behind it. A Malayalam verb costs you three forms. A Tamil one costs three tenses times six persons.

Your turn

- *Say it:* the command — “vā!”
- *Say it:* the three times — “varunnu ... vannu ... varun̄”
- *Say it:* the pair, past against past — “pōyi ... vannu”
- *Say it:* the goodbye you now understand — “pōyi varān̄”
- *Recall:* say *rātri*

Before you move on

Which tense of *varuka* is the irregular one? (**The past** — *vannu*.) Say “I will come.” (*Ñān varun̄*.) Are Kannada *bā* and Telugu *rā* different verbs from *varuka*? (**No** — one old Dravidian word, reshaped three ways.) Next: a verb Malayalam kept where Tamil built a new one.

32.4 തിന്നുക (tinnuka) — “to eat,” and the ending that names a verb’s homeland

Malayalam took in a great deal of Sanskrit. Eating is one of the places it never reached.

What to know first

തിന്നുക — *tinnuka* — to eat

ഉണ്ണുക — *un̄nuka* — to eat a meal, to dine

Two inherited verbs, both alive. *Tinnuka* is eating in general. *Un̄nuka* is sitting down to a proper meal, and gives the noun ഉൺ (*un̄*), “lunch.” The tenses are regular: *tinnunnu*, *tinnu*, *tinnun̄*.

The letters in this word

തി (*ti*) + ന്നു (a doubled *nn* with *u*) + ക (*ka*) → തിന്നുക, with the long *n* you held in *vannu*. In ഉണ്ണുക that doubled letter is retroflex ണ്ണ (*ṇṇ*): *uṇ-ṇu-ka*.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

തിന്നുക goes back to Dravidian *tin-*, and the family kept it: Telugu తిను (*tinu*), Kannada ತಿನ್ನು (*tinnu*).

Tamil kept *tin* too, as தின், but narrowed it to chewing and built a **new** everyday word from two of its own: சாப்பிடு (*sāppiḍu*) is *sāppu* (“food”) plus *iḍu* (“to put”). Put food. Tamil’s ordinary eat-verb is home-made; Malayalam’s is the family’s original.

Grammar Lens: -ഉക and -ഇക്കുക, two doors into the verb

Every verb so far has ended in -ഉക (-*uka*): *tinnuka*, *pōkuka*, *varuka*, *irikkuka*. Chapter 5’s “to speak” did not — it was സംസാരിക്കുക (*saṁsārikkuka*), with a longer -ഇക്കുക (-*ikkuka*). That difference is a passport stamp:

ending	what it marks
-ഉക - <i>uka</i>	an inherited Dravidian verb
-ഇക്കുക - <i>ikkuka</i>	a Sanskrit word made into a verb

Sanīsārīkkuka is built on Sanskrit *sanīsāra*; Chapter 9’s ക്ഷമിക്കുക (*kṣamīkkuka*, “to forgive”) on *kṣamā*. Malayalam needed one dependable way to make a verb of any borrowed noun, and -ഇക്കുക is it: a naturalisation ceremony you can hear.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- the two eat-verbs — “tinnuka” (eat) and “uṇṇuka” (dine)
- the three times — “tinnunnu ... tinnu ... tinnun”
- the cousins that kept the root — “tinu ... tinnu ... tinnuka”
- the two endings — “-uka is ours, -ikkuka came from Sanskrit”

Before you move on

Did Malayalam borrow its everyday word for eating? (**No** — Tamil is the one that built a new compound.) Which verb is for sitting down to a meal? (ഉണ്ണുക, *unnuka*.) What does *-ikkuka* tell you? (**That the verb was made from a Sanskrit word.**) Next: a verb Malayalam kept where all three sisters walked away.

32.5 കാണുക (kāṇuka) — “to see,” and everything else the second slot can hold

Two slots, and the second one has only carried tense so far. It holds a good deal more — and you have used one of its other endings since Chapter 4.

What to know first

കാണുക — *kāṇuka* — to see, to meet

Present *kāṇunnu*, future *kāṇuni*, and a past that reshapes the way *vannu* did: കണ്ടു (*kaṇṭu*), “saw.”

You have said this verb in a goodbye. നാളെ കാണാം (*nāle kāṇāmi*) — “see you tomorrow” — is *nāle* (“tomorrow”) plus this stem with a different ending.

The letters in this word

കാ (*ka* with the long-*ā* sign) + ണു (retroflex *ṇu*) + ക (*ka*) → കാണുക. That ണ is the letter that ended *uṇṭū*: tongue curled back to the roof of the mouth.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

Kāṇ- is the family’s own see-root, inherited from Proto-Dravidian — and here the four sisters part company. **Tamil** says പറ (pār), keeping കാண் (*kāṇ*) for formal writing; **Kannada** says ನೋಡು (*nōḍu*), keeping കാಣು (*kāṇu*) alongside; **Telugu** says చూడు (*cūḍu*). Malayalam simply kept the inherited word in daily use. Twice now — *tinnuka* and *kāṇuka* — the youngest of the four sisters turns out to be the conservative one.

Grammar Lens: tense is only one thing that ending can be

Hold *kāṇ-* still and change what follows it:

ending on <i>kāṇ-</i>	what it says
<i>kāṇunnu</i>	sees, is seeing
<i>kāṇumī</i>	will see
<i>kāṇāmī</i>	may see; let's see
<i>kāṇaṇamī</i>	must see
<i>kāṇarutū</i>	must not see

Time, permission, obligation, prohibition — all in the same single slot. This is where the person ending went: Malayalam gave that slot up and spent the room on **mood** instead.

And the payoff lands on every line. *Kāṇaṇamī* is “I must see,” “you must see” and “they must see” without changing a letter. In Tamil each of those five ideas must still pick a person ending before it can be said aloud.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “*kāṇuka*” — to see — and the past, “*kaṇṭu*”
- the farewell you now understand — “*nāḷe kāṇāmī*”
- the ladder — “*kāṇunnu ... kāṇumī ... kāṇāmī ... kāṇaṇamī ... kāṇarutū*”
- one form, three people — “*ñān, nī, avar ... kāṇaṇamī*”

Before you move on

Which of the four sisters kept the inherited see-word for everyday use? (**Malayalam** — the other three each chose a different word.) Say “must see” and “must not see.” (*Kāṇaṇamī*; *kāṇarutū*.) What besides tense does that second slot carry? (**Mood** — permission, obligation, prohibition.) Next: the verb that moves the person out of the sentence altogether.

32.6 അറിയുക (*ariyuka*) — “to know,” the verb that takes no subject

Five verbs, and every one let you stand in front of it as *ñān*, “I.”
The last one will not — and Chapter 6 already handed you the sentence it makes.

What to know first

അറിയുക — *ariyuka* — to know

Present *ariyunnu*, past അറിഞ്ഞു (*arīññu*), and the form you have met: അറിയാം (*ariyāmi*), with the *-āmi* ending of the last lesson.

Native Dravidian, and the sisters kept the root — Tamil அறி (*ari*), Kannada ಅರಿ (*ari*) — though for everyday knowing each reached elsewhere: Tamil தெரியும் (*teriyum*), Telugu తెలుసు (*telusu*). Malayalam stayed with *ari-*.

The letters in this word

അ (the standing vowel *a*) + റി (*ri*) + യു (*yu*) + ക (*ka*) → അറിയുക. The റ is Malayalam’s hard, tapped *r*, a different letter and a different sound from the soft ര (*r*) of *varuka*.

Grammar Lens: the knower leaves the subject slot

എനിക്ക് മലയാളം അറിയാം. — *enikkū malayāḷam ariyāmi* — “I know Malayalam.”

Chapter 6 gave you that sentence whole. Here is the verb inside it. You cannot say *ñān malayāḷam ariyāmi*: the one who knows is not the subject. That person moves into the **dative**, the “to me” case.

- *enikkū ariyāmi* — it is known **to me**
- *ninakku ariyāmi* — it is known **to you**
- *avanū ariyāmi* — it is known **to him**

Malayalam treats knowing as something that **arrives at** you rather than something you **do**, and marks it with the pronoun’s case. That is the chapter’s closing symmetry. With the other five verbs the pronoun in front was the only thing telling you who acted, because the

verb carried no person. Here it has changed case, so the sentence has no subject at all. Malayalam took the person off the verb; this construction takes it out of the subject slot too.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “ariyuka” — to know — and the past, “ariññu”
- “enikkũ malayāḷaṁ ariyāṁ” — I know Malayalam
- three knowers, one verb — “enikkũ ... ninakku ... avanũ ariyāṁ”
- the chapter’s six — “uṇṭũ, pōkunnu, varunnu, tinnunnu, kāṇunnu, ariyunnu”

Before you move on

Say “I know Malayalam,” and name the case the “I” wears. (*Enikku malayāḷaṁ ariyāṁ* — the **dative**.) Name the two slots of a Malayalam verb. (**Stem and tense**, with no third slot for person.) Which of the six verbs has an irregular past? (*Varuka* → *vannu*, and *kāṇuka* → *kaṇṭu*.) Which be-word says “I have”? (ഉണ്ടു, *uṇṭũ*.) How many forms has the Malayalam present tense, for any verb at all? (**One**.)

Chapter 33

The Mind and the Page

Modes: 👁 eyes (4) ⇌ Hands-free start: all 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say that I think, understand, read and write in Malayalam, hear from a verb’s own ending which of the four Malayalam borrowed, and put the understander in the dative where Malayalam puts him.

Say ഞാൻ മലയാളം എഴുതുന്നു, run the chapter’s four verbs back and pick out the two wearing the Sanskrit -ഇക്കുക stamp, and say why Malayalam and Tamil write with one word while Kannada and Telugu, having lost its ഴ, reach for another.

33.1 ചിന്തിക്കുക (cintikkuka) — “to think,” on a suffix you have used since Chapter 9

Say *enikkū malayāḷam ariyāmi*. Knowing **arrived** at you, so the “I” left the subject slot. Thinking you do — and you keep it.

What to know first

ചിന്തിക്കുക — *cintikkuka* — to think

ഞാൻ ചിന്തിക്കുന്നു. — *ñān cintikkunnu* — “I think.”

Past ചിന്തിച്ചു (*cinticcu*), future *cintikkumī*. And *cintikkunnu* is the whole present tense — *ñān*, *nī*, *avar*, one word for everybody.

The letters in this word

ചി (*ca* + the *i* sign) + ന്നി (the conjunct ന്ത *nta*, also with *i*) + ക്കു + ക.
That ക്ക is the held-long *kk* of *kṣamikkuka*.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

ചിന്ത (*cinta*) is a **noun** first — “thought, care” — borrowed whole from Sanskrit चिन्ता (*cintā*), which carries the same double sense of thinking and worrying.

Native think-words live on beside it: ഓർക്കുക (*ōrkkuka*), narrowed to “remember”; നിനക്കുക (*ninekka*), now literary.

Grammar Lens: -ഇക്കുക, the suffix that naturalises a loan

Chapter 9 made ക്ഷമിക്കുക (*kṣamikkuka*, “to forgive”) from Sanskrit ക്ഷമ plus -ഇക്കുക; Chapter 32 made that ending a passport stamp — -ഉക on an inherited verb, -ഇക്കുക on a borrowing. *Cinta* + *-ikkuka* is the same machine.

That second slot still takes mood as readily as tense: *cintikkāṇi* (“let’s think”), ചിന്തിക്കണം (*cintikkaṇaṇi*, “must think”) on the very -ണം that made *kṣamikkaṇaṇi* polite, *cintikkarutū* (“must not think”).

Each sister has that suffix in her own shape — Kannada -ಇಸು, Telugu -ఇంసు — all inherited from one source. What differs is who used it here. **Tamil** kept native நினை (*niṇai*); **Telugu** and **Kannada** built theirs from a word meaning “to say,” *anukō*, “to say to oneself.” Only Malayalam borrowed — and the word it demoted, *ninekka*, is *niṇai* exactly.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “ñān cintikkunnu,” then the past, “cinticcu”
- noun, verb, and its cousin — “cinta ... cintikkuka ... kṣamikkuka”
- the mood ladder — “cintikkāṇi ... cintikkaṇaṇi ... cintikkarutū”
- three strategies — “niṇai” kept, “anukō” built, “cintikkuka” borrowed

- knowing, then thinking — “enikkū malayāḷam aṛiyāṁ,” “ñān cintikkunnu”

Before you move on

Say “I think,” and name the noun inside it. (*Ñān cintikkunnu*; ചിന്ത, Sanskrit for **thought**.) What does -ഇക്കുക tell you, and which earlier verb wore it? (**Made from a borrowing**; *kṣamikkuka*.) Say “must think.” (*Cintikkaṇaṁ* — the -ണം of *kṣamikkaṇaṁ*, a mood in the tense slot.) Which sister kept a native think-word, and which built one from “say”? (**Tamil**, *ninai*; **Telugu**, *anukō*.) Why can *aṛiyuka* not take *ñān*? (**Knowing arrives at you**.)

33.2 മനസ്സിലാക്കുക (manassilākkuka) — “to understand,” or: to put it in the mind

Say *ñān cintikkunnu*, then *enikkū*. One is what you do; the other is the “to me” of Chapter 6. This word needs both.

What to know first

മനസ്സിലാക്കുക — *manassilākkuka* — to understand

ഞാൻ മനസ്സിലാക്കുന്നു. — *ñān manassilākkunnu* — “I understand.”

Past മനസ്സിലാക്കി (*manassilākki*). It is long, but not one lump: you can hear the seams.

The letters in this word

മ (*ma*) + ന (*na*) + സ്സി (a doubled സ് *ssa* with the *i* sign) + ലാ (*la* + long *ā*) + ക്ക + ക. Hold that സ്സി long.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

Three pieces, and you have met every one:

- മനസ്സ് (*manassū*) — “mind,” Sanskrit मनस् (*manas*)
- -ഇൽ (*-il*) — “in,” the ending of *vīṭṭil*, “at home”

- ആക്കുക (*ākkuka*) — “to make, to put”

Put in the mind. That is the whole word — transparent to any Malayalam speaker, which is why it never wore down.

Sanskrit *manas* is from the Indo-European root **men-*, “to think,” and so are English **mind** and **mental** and Latin *mēns* — by a different branch of it, so relatives rather than the same word. (*Mind*’s exact Sanskrit match is मति *mati*; *manas*’s is Greek *ménos*.)

Grammar Lens: two verbs, one root, and who does the work

ആക്കുക *makes* something so; its twin ആകുക (*ākuka*) means it *becomes* so. Swap them and the sentence changes hands:

എനിക്ക് മനസ്സിലായി. — *enikkū manassilāyi* — “I understood.”

Literally: “to me — it became in the mind.” No *ñān*. The understander wears the dative -ഇക്ക്, as the knower does in *enikkū malayāḷam ariyāṁ*. Chapter 6 separated what you **do** from what **happens to** you; here one root does both, and the ending decides which. *Manassilāyi* is much the commoner in speech.

Neither form takes -ഇക്കുക: both sit on native *ākuka*, so no passport stamp.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- the three pieces — “manassū ... -il ... ākkuka”
- “ñān manassilākkunnu,” then the past, “manassilākki”
- the everyday one — “enikkū manassilāyi”
- three understanders — “enikkū ... ninakku ... avanū manassilāyi”
- the two datives together — “enikkū malayāḷam ariyāṁ,” “enikkū manassilāyi”
- with and without a stamp — “cintikkuka ... manassilākkuka”

Before you move on

Name the three pieces of *manassilākkuka*. (**Mind, in, put.**) Which English words share its root? (**Mind, mental.**) Say “I understood” the way it is usually said, and name the case you wear. (*Enikku manassilāyi*; the **dative**, as in *enikkū malayāḷam ariyāmi*.) Which of today’s two verbs carries **-ഇക്കുക**, and why? (*Cintikkuka* — its noun was borrowed.)

33.3 വായിക്കുക (vāyikkuka) — “to read,” and a mouth that turns out not to be there

Manassilākkuka came apart into three pieces you could name. The next word looks as obliging — and the piece you hear is not there.

What to know first

വായിക്കുക — *vāyikkuka* — to read

ഞാൻ മലയാളം വായിക്കുന്നു. — *ñān malayāḷam vāyikkunnu*
— “I read Malayalam.”

Past വായിച്ചു (*vāyiccu*). The noun beside it is വായന (*vāyana*), “reading.”

The letters in this word

വാ (*va* + long *ā*) + യി (*ya* + the *i* sign) + ക്കു + ക. Nothing new since *cintikkuka* — the same ക്കുക tail.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

The obvious guess is വായ് (*vāy*), “mouth” — reading as mouthing the words. A good guess, and wrong.

Gundert marks the noun വായന a *tadbhava* of Sanskrit वच् (*vac*), “to speak,” and gives the Tamil verb as *vācikka*. Sanskrit वाचन (*vācana*) is “reading aloud.” Reading was named for the **voice**; the mouth-word only sounds like it.

The *c* did not soften in Malayalam. It softened on the road — a *tadbhava* is a word that came the long way, through the middle Indo-Aryan languages, which drop a single consonant between vowels. Malayalam also holds the same Sanskrit word borrowed **straight**, വാചകം (*vācakam*), so it sits here twice; *vāyana* is the travelled one, and the -ഇക്കുക stamp agrees.

Nor did the sisters agree which word to use. Tamil’s everyday படி (*paṭi*) is Sanskrit too, from *paṭh-*; Telugu has చదువు (*caduvu*). Only **Kannada** kept a native read-verb in ordinary use, ಓದು (*ōdu*) — which Malayalam also has, as ഓതുക (*ōtuka*), narrowed to reciting scripture.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “ñān malayāḷaṁ vāyikkunnu,” then the past, “vāyiccu”
- the false trail, then the true one — “vāy” ... “vac, vācana, vāyana”
- the same word twice — “vācakam” straight, “vāyana” travelled
- the four read-verbs — “vāyikkuka ... paṭi ... ōdu ... caduvu”
- read what you know — the planet-days, “tiṅkaḷ ... velli ... ñāyar” — and the year’s first month, “Chinṇam”
- when — “ñān rāville vāyikkunnu,” I read in the morning
- what you do, what arrives — “ñān vāyikkunnu,” “enikkū manassilāyi”
- the three pieces of understanding — “manassū ... -il ... ākkuka”

Before you move on

Say “I read Malayalam.” (*Ñān malayāḷaṁ vāyikkunnu.*) Is *vāy*, “mouth,” inside it? (**No** — the trail runs to Sanskrit *vac*, “speak,” and *vācana*, “reciting aloud”; the *c* softened **on the road**, and Malayalam keeps *vācakam* unsoftened beside it.) Do the sisters share a read-verb? (**No** — *paṭi*, *ōdu*, *caduvu*, and only *ōdu* is native.)

33.4 എഴുതുക (elutuka) — “to write,” and the one letter two sisters kept

Reading came from Sanskrit. Writing did not travel at all — and it kept a sound most of the family has lost.

What to know first

എഴുതുക — *elutuka* — to write

ഞാൻ മലയാളം എഴുതുന്നു. — *ñān malayāḷam elutunnu* —
“I write Malayalam.”

Past എഴുതി (*eluti*). Note the tail: plain -ഉക, no ഇ — no passport stamp, because nothing was borrowed.

The letters in this word

എ (the standing vowel *e*) + ഴ (ഴ *la* with *u*) + തു (*tu*) + ക (*ka*). The ഴ is the letter of *ēlu*, “seven” — curl the tongue back and let the air pass, neither quite an *l* nor quite an *r*. Standard Malayalam keeps it; northern dialects have let it go, as Kannada did.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

Malayalam’s എഴുതുക and Tamil’s எழுது (*elutu*) are not cousins. They are the **same word** — and the Dravidian etymological dictionary finds it in only two other, much smaller languages. Beside “write, paint, draw” it records a stranger sense: “**become indented by pressure**.” A letter is a mark pressed into a leaf with the കൈ (*kai*), the hand. (You may see it linked to എഴു *elu*, “to rise”; the dictionary keeps them apart, so treat that as unproven.)

The ഴ is the sound inside the name തമിഴ് itself. Chapter 7 watched it harden going east: *ēlu*, *ēlu*, *ēdu*. Kannada and Telugu lost the letter — and with it this verb. They write with an unrelated root: ಬರೆ (*bare*), രాయ (*rāyu*), from an old word for a **drawn line**.

Malayalam has that root too — വരയ്ക്കുക (*varaykkuka*) — and gave it the other job: **to draw**. Two roots, two tasks, as with *uṇṭū* and *irikkuka*.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “ñān malayāḷam̐ elutunnu,” then “eluti”
- when — “ñān rātri elutunnu,” I write at night
- the two sisters’ one word — “elutuka ... elutu”
- the sound hardening east — “ēlu ... ēḷu ... ēḍu”
- write, then draw — “elutuka ... varaykkuka”
- the chapter’s നാല് — “cintikkunnu, manassilākkunnu, vāyikkunnu, elutunnu”
- with Chapter 32’s six that makes പത്ത് — “uṇṭṭṭu, pōkunnu, varunnu, tinnunnu, kāṇunnu, aṛiyunnu”
- the two that carry the stamp — “cintikkuka, vāyikkuka”
- and the sentence with no subject — “enikkū manassilāyi”

Before you move on

Say “I write Malayalam,” and how far Tamil’s word is from it. (*ñān malayāḷam̐ elutunnu*; **not at all**.) Which sound do the standard languages keep, and what did Kannada and Telugu do about writing? (ഴ; they lost it and took another root, *bare*, *rāyu*.) Run the chapter’s four, and say which two were borrowed. (*Cintikkunnu*, *manassilākkunnu*, *vāyikkunnu*, *elutunnu*; *cinta* and *vac*, wearing -ഇക്കുക.) Which refuses you as its subject? (*Enikku manassilāyi*.)

Chapter 34

Taking, Asking, Helping, Liking

Modes: 👁 eyes (4) ⇌ Hands-free start: all 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can take, ask, help and say what I like in Malayalam, tell a native geminate stem apart from the Sanskrit verb-maker that looks just like it, and say why എനിക്ക് മലയാളം ഇഷ്ടമാണ് leaves no room for me as its subject.

Say എനിക്ക് മലയാളം ഇഷ്ടമാണ് and hear that you are not its subject, set it beside എനിക്ക് മലയാളം അറിയാം and എനിക്ക് മനസ്സിലായി so one frame carries three meanings, and run the chapter's four back by the past tenses that betray which of them were borrowed.

34.1 എടുക്കുക (eṭukkuka) — “to take,” and a rule that needed one correction

Vāyikkunnu was borrowed, *elutunnu* was not, and you could hear which was which. This one sounds borrowed and is not.

What to know first

എടുക്കുക — *eṭukkuka* — to take, to pick up

ഞാൻ വെള്ളം എടുക്കുന്നു. — *ñān vellam eṭukkunnu* — “I take water.”

Three times, as always: *eṭukkunnu*, എടുത്തു (*eṭuttu*), *eṭukkumi*.

The letters in this word

എ (the standing vowel *e*, as in *elutuka*) + ടു (retroflex *ṣ ṭa* with *u*) + കു + ക. Curl the tongue back for the *ṣ*.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

Gundert glosses it “**to raise, lift, take up**,” and the lifting came first. Tamil எடு (*eṭu*) is the same word again — and the etymological dictionary gives this root no entry of its own, filing *eṭu* inside the family of എഴു (*elū*), “**to rise**.” Rise, then raise, then take. Kannada and Telugu say ఎత్తు / ఎత్త (eṭṭū) for lifting; whether that is the same word the dictionaries argue over, so take the resemblance and leave the verdict.

It wants an object: *vellam eṭukkunnu*, water; *ari eṭukkunnu*, raw rice; *cōrū eṭukkunnu*, the cooked kind.

Grammar Lens: the stamp is the ഇ, not the ക

Chapter 32 gave you a rule: -ഉക on an inherited verb, -ഇക്കുക on a borrowing made into one. *Eṭukkuka* looks like a counter-example. It is not: the rule was always about one letter.

- *cintikkuka*, *vāyikkuka* — ഇ before the ക: borrowed
- *eṭukkuka*, *irikkuka* — no ഇ: native, doubling its own consonant

The ക belongs to the stem; the ഇ is the naturalisation ceremony. And the past tense settles every case: a borrowed verb ends -ഇച്ചു (*cinticcu*, *vāyiccu*), a native one does not (*eṭuttu*, *eluti*).

Beneath that, nothing has changed. *Ñān eṭukkunnu*, *nī eṭukkunnu*, *avar eṭukkunnu* — three forms are still the whole conjugation, native or borrowed.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “ñān vellam eṭukkunnu,” then the past, “eṭuttu”
- three things to take — “vellam ... ari ... cōrū”
- rise, raise, take — “elū ... eṭu ... eṭukkuka”

- listen for the *i* — “cintikkuka, vāyikkuka” against “eṭukkuka, eḷutuka”
- and the pasts that prove it — “cinticcu, vāyiccu” against “eṭuttu, eḷuti”
- three people, one form — “ñān, nī, avar ... eṭukkunnu”

Before you move on

Say “I take water,” then the past. (*Ñān vellani eṭukkunnu; eṭuttu.*) What did the root mean before “take”? (**To rise**, then **to raise**.) Is *eṭukkuka* a borrowing, and how do you know? (**No** — no ഇ, no -ഇച്ചു past; *cintikkuka* and *vāyikkuka* have both.) How many present forms has it? (**One**.)

34.2 ചോദിക്കുക (cōdikkuka) — “to ask,” which began as pushing

Eṭuttu — a native past. Listen for what the next verb’s past does instead, and you will know where it came from before you are told.

What to know first

ചോദിക്കുക — *cōdikkuka* — to ask

ഞാൻ ചോദിക്കുന്നു. — *ñān cōdikkunnu* — “I ask.”

Past ചോദിച്ചു (*cōdiccu*) — there it is, the -ഇച്ചു of a borrowing. The noun beside it is ചോദ്യം (*cōdyam*), “a question.”

The letters in this word

ചോ (*ca* wearing the long-*ō* sign) + ദി (*ṛ da* with the *i* sign) + ക്കു (*kku*) + ക (*ka*). That *ṛ* is a voiced *d*, one of the sounds Sanskrit brought into the alphabet.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

Gundert files it under the Sanskrit root ചുദ് (*cud*), “**to incite, to urge**” — and his entry still lists the senses in the order they arrived: first to incite, then to demand, then to question. In Sanskrit philosophy चोद्य (*codya*) was an **objection pressed** at an opponent. Asking began as pushing.

Malayalam needed the word because of something it had done to its own. The family’s inherited **kēl-* covered **hearing and asking together**, and Tamil’s கேள் (*kēl*) still does both. Malayalam kept കേൾക്കുക (*kēlkkuka*) for **hearing only** — and the empty half is exactly where the loan settled.

Two questions from Chapter 18 and Chapter 19 you can now say you are asking: *etra maṇi?*, “what hour?”, and *ninnaḷkku etra vayassuṇṭū?*, “how old are you?” Chapter 8’s ദയവായി in front softens either.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “*ñān cōdikkunnu*,” then the past, “*cōdiccu*”
- verb, then noun — “*cōdikkuka ... cōdyam*”
- the three senses in order — “*incite ... demand ... ask*”
- ask the hour — “*dayavāyi, etra maṇi?*”
- ask the age — “*ninnaḷkku etra vayassuṇṭū?*”
- hear, then ask — “*kēlkkuka ... cōdikkuka*”
- the two pasts — “*cōdiccu*” borrowed, “*eṭuttu*” and “*eluti*” not

Before you move on

Say “I ask,” then the past, and say what the past tells you. (*Ñān cōdikkunnu*; *cōdiccu*; -ഇച്ഛ means **borrowed**.) What did the root mean first, and why did Malayalam need it? (**To incite, to urge** — and its own *kēlkkuka* had narrowed to hearing, where Tamil’s *kēl* still asks.) Now ask someone’s age, politely. (*Dayavāyi, ninnaḷkku etra vayassuṇṭū?*)

34.3 സഹായിക്കുക (sahāyikkuka) — “to help,” or: to go along with

Cōdiccu told you it was borrowed. The next verb’s past says the same — and by now you can guess what happened to the Malayalam word it replaced.

What to know first

സഹായിക്കുക — *sahāyikkuka* — to help

ഞാൻ സഹായിക്കുന്നു. — *ñān sahāyikkunnu* — “I help.”

Past സഹായിച്ചു (*sahāyiccu*). The noun is സഹായം (*sahāyam*), “help,” and it came first — the verb was made from it.

The letters in this word

സ (*sa*) + ഹാ (ഹ *ha* + long *ā*) + യി (*ya* + the *i* sign) + ക്കു + ക. That ാ + യി pair is the one you spelled inside ദയവായി, letter for letter.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

Sanskrit सहाय (*sahāya*) first meant a **companion**. Monier-Williams reads it as सह (*saha*), “with,” plus a form of the root ३ (*i*), “to go” — one who **goes along with** you — and marks the reading *probable* rather than certain. That go-root is Indo-European ***h₁ey-**, the one inside Latin *īre* and Greek *eīmi*. Helping, named as walking beside. Tamil alone kept the family’s own word for everyday use: உதவி (*utavi*). Malayalam has the cognate — ഉതവി, with the verb ഉതക്കുക — but the daily work goes to the loan, as it does in Kannada, Telugu and Hindi.

That is the fourth time in two chapters: *ōtuka* gave up reading, *ōrkkuka* gave up thinking, *kēlkkuka* gave up asking, *utavi* gave up helping — and a Sanskrit word took each vacated slot. It is not random. It is the mark of the centuries when Kerala’s writers mixed the two languages on purpose.

The other direction exists too. ദയവായി is Sanskrit *daya*, and there **all four sisters borrowed together** — *tayavu seytu*, *dayavittu*, *dayacēsi*. For politeness nobody kept a native word.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “ñān sahāyikkunnu,” then the past, “sahāyiccu”
- noun, then verb — “sahāyaṁ ... sahāyikkuka”
- the pieces — “saha” with, “i” to go — one who goes along
- ask for it politely, on Chapter 8’s ending — “sahāyikkaṇaṁ”
- native, then loan — “utavi ... sahāyaṁ”
- the four that gave way — “ōtuka, ōrkkuka, kēlkkuka, utavi”
- and the four that borrowed together — “dayavāyi, tayavu seytu, dayaviṭṭu, dayacēsi”

Before you move on

Say “I help,” and say what *sahāya* meant first. (*Ñān sahāyikkunnu*; **a companion** — one who goes with you.) Which sister kept her own help-word for daily use? (**Tamil**, *utavi* — Malayalam has *utavi* but rarely reaches for it.) Say “please help.” (*Sahāyikkaṇaṁ*, on the -**ണം** that carries everyday politeness.) And which word did all four sisters borrow together? (**ദയ** *daya*.)

34.4 എനിക്ക് മലയാളം ഇഷ്ടമാണ് — “I like Malayalam,” and you are not its subject

Ñān sahāyikkunnu, ñān eṭukkunnu — you have stood in front of every verb so far. Not this one.

What to know first

എനിക്ക് മലയാളം ഇഷ്ടമാണ്. *enikkū malayāḷaṁ iṣṭamāṇ*
— “to me — Malayalam — is a liking.”

ഇഷ്ടം is a **noun**; **-ആണ്** is Chapter 2’s copula. Only the front moves: *enikkū, ninakku, avanū*.

The letters in this word

ഇ (the standing vowel *i*) + ഞ്ശ (ഞ *ṣa* over *ś* *ṭa*, both retroflex) + ൾ, the anusvāram of *malayāḷam*.

Grammar Lens: three sentences on one frame

Enikku malayāḷam ariyāṁ — I **know** it. *Enikku manassilāyi* — I **understood**. *Enikku malayāḷam iṣṭamāṇũ* — I **like** it. One frame, three meanings; Chapter 6 promised the third before you had words for it. Swap the thing and it holds: *enikkũ maḷa iṣṭamāṇũ*, “I like rain.” Here the dative is not a preference. ***Ñān malayāḷam iṣṭamāṇũ* is ungrammatical.**

Two ways round it, one native. ഇഷ്ടപ്പെടുക (*iṣṭappetuka*) is this noun made a verb, and takes either shape. പിടിക്കുക (*piṭikkuka*), “to catch,” is Malayalam’s own: Gundert records എനിക്കു പിടിച്ചില്ല, “it did not please me.” Malayalam never needed *iṣṭam*; it took it.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

ഇഷ്ടം is Sanskrit इष्ट, the participle of इष् (iṣ), “to desire,” from the Indo-European root **h₂eys-*, which also produced English **ask**. The chapter’s two Sanskrit words crossed over: *cōḍikkuka*, which **means** ask, came from a root meaning **drive**; *iṣṭam*, which means **like**, came from **ask**’s root.

The shape turns up far from Kerala. Spanish says **me gusta**, “to me it pleases”; Italian **mi piace**; Tamil **eṇakkut tamil piḍikkum**. None borrowed it from another — Tamil is not even in their family — yet all three put the liker where Malayalam does. Chapter 6’s row is the near end: **-ikku, -ukku, -ku, -ge**.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “enikkũ malayāḷam iṣṭamāṇũ” — to me, Malayalam, is a liking
- three likers, then a new thing — “enikkũ ... ninakku ... avanũ,” then “enikkũ maḷa iṣṭamāṇũ”
- the three datives — “ariyāṁ, manassilāyi, iṣṭamāṇũ”
- the two ways round — “ñān iṣṭappetunnu,” “enikkũ piṭiccu”

- the chapter’s **മാലി** — “eṭukkunnu, cōdikkunnu, sahāyikkunnu, iṣṭamāñṭ”
- the borrowings, by their pasts — “cōdiccu, sahāyiccu,” not “eṭuttu”
- the same shape far away — “me gusta ... mi piace ... piḍikkum” — on “-ikku · -ukku · -ku · -ge”

Before you move on

Say “I like Malayalam,” and how many verbs it holds. (*Enikku malayālami iṣṭamāñṭ*; **one**, the copula.) Can you be its subject? (**No** — not unusual, **impossible**.) Name the three dative sentences and Malayalam’s own way of liking. (*Ariyāṁ, manassilāyi, iṣṭamāñṭ*; പിടിക്കുക.) Which English word shares *iṣṭamī*’s root, and is it *cōdikkuka*’s? (**Ask; no** — that came from **drive**.)

Chapter 35

Family and Friend

Modes:  voice (1)  eyes (1)  pen (1)  Hands-free start: first 2 of 3 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name my family as a group and name a friend in Malayalam, and say which of the two words is a Sanskrit loan and which of Malayalam’s two friend-words leans on a borrowed ending even though its root is native.

Say ithu ente kudumbamaanu and ithu ente suhruthaanu, take suhruthu apart into su plus hrid, and name the six Chapter 12 people-words next to the one group-word none of them supplied.

35.1 കുടുംബം (kuṭumbam) — “family,” the word the six people-words never needed

Enikku malayāḷaṇi iṣṭamāṇṁ closed the last chapter on a sentence built from nothing but nouns and a dative. This chapter opens on the plainest nouns of all: the people you would actually say it to.

What to know first

കുടുംബം — *kuṭumbam* — family

ഇത് എന്റെ കുടുംബമാണ്. — *ithu ente kuṭumbamāṇṁ*. —
“This is my family.”

Ente, “my,” has been yours since your very first sentences; -ആണ് is the same copula that closed *enikkṁ malayāḷaṇi iṣṭamāṇṁ*.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

കുടുംബം is Sanskrit तत्सम कुटुम्ब (kuṭumba), “family, household,” absorbed with the same nativizing -അം ending you already met on ഇഷ്ടം and സുഖം — a genuine Malayalam habit: dress a bare Sanskrit neuter stem in Malayalam’s own **-an̄i**. Kannada borrows the identical word **bare**, ಕುಟುಂಬ (kuṭumba), no ending added — one more place Malayalam leans harder into Sanskrit than its sisters do, this time in the shape of the loan rather than the fact of it.

You already have six words for six specific people: അച്ഛൻ, അമ്മ, and the four age-graded siblings ചേട്ടൻ/അനിയൻ, ചെച്ചി/അനിയത്തി.

Every one is native Dravidian, and not one of them means “family” — each names a single, specific person.

Malayalam never inherited a word for the group itself, so when it needed one, it reached for Sanskrit. The people came first, and stayed native; the collective came later, and came borrowed.

Your turn

- *Say it:* “ithu ente kuṭumbamāṇũ” — this is my family
- *Say it:* the six named people, then the borrowed group word — “acchan, amma, cēṭṭan, aniyān, cēcci, aniyatti ... kuṭumbam̄i”
- *Say it:* bare against dressed — “kuṭumba” (Kannada), “kuṭumbam̄i” (Malayalam)
- *Recall:* say uṇṭũ, then read പോക്കുക, then say varuka

Before you move on

Say “this is my family.” (*Ithu ente kuṭumbamāṇũ.*) Is *kuṭumbam̄i* native Dravidian or a loan? (**A Sanskrit loan**, like *iṣṭam̄i* and *sukham̄i* — and dressed in the same **-an̄i**.) Name the six family words you already know. (*Acchan, amma, cēṭṭan, aniyān, cēcci, aniyatti.*) Which of those six means “family” as a group? (**None of them** — that’s exactly the gap *kuṭumbam̄i* fills.)

35.2 സുഹൃത്ത് (suhṛttü) — “friend,” a word built out of “good” plus “heart”

Kuṭumbani named the group you’re born into. This word names the one you choose.

What to know first

സുഹൃത്ത് — *suhṛttü* — friend

ഇത് എന്റെ സുഹൃത്താണ്. — *ithu ente suhṛttāṇũ*. — “This is my friend.”

The everyday spoken alternative is കൂട്ടുകാരൻ (*kūṭṭukāran*, male) / കൂട്ടുകാരി (*kūṭṭukāri*, female).

The letters in this word

ഹൃ is ഹ (*ha*) carrying the ള് sign — the short vocalic *r* inherited straight from Sanskrit, the same vowel that opened വൃശ്ചികം several chapters back. Malayalam is the only one of the four literary Dravidian scripts that still writes it as a distinct vowel sign rather than respelling it away.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

സുഹൃത്ത് is Sanskrit सुहृद् (*suhṛd*), literally “good-heart”: सु (*su*) “good” plus हृद् (*hṛd*) “heart” — the very root a later chapter in this same stretch meets again as ഹൃദയം, “heart” itself. Friendship, in Malayalam’s borrowed word for it, is a matter of the heart before it is a matter of anything else.

Everyday speech reaches just as often for കൂട്ടുകാരൻ/കൂട്ടുകാരി — native കൂട്ട് (*kūṭṭü*, “joining, group,” the same root as the verb കൂടുക, “to join, unite”) plus the agentive -കാരൻ/-കാരി. That suffix is itself borrowed, from Sanskrit कार (*kāra*, “maker, doer”) fused onto a Dravidian personal ending — so even Malayalam’s more casual, native-rooted word for “friend” leans on a Sanskrit-derived ending to finish the job. Selective borrowing, as *santōṣam* already showed back near the start of this book, does not always mean choosing one word wholesale over another; sometimes it means splicing a Dravidian root and a Sanskrit ending into a single new word.

Your turn

- *Say it:* “ithu ente suhṛttāṇṡ” — this is my friend
- *Say it:* the casual alternative — “kūṭṭukāran, kūṭṭukāri”
- *Say it:* the two pieces — “su,” good, plus “hṛd,” heart
- *Say it:* family and friend, one chapter — “kuṭumbam ... suhṛttū”
- *Recall:* read തിന്നുക, then say *kāṇuka*, then read അറിയുക

Before you move on

Say “this is my friend.” (*Ithu ente suhṛttāṇṡ*.) What does *suhṛttū* literally mean, piece by piece? (“**Good**” *su* + “**heart**” *hṛd*.) Name the everyday spoken alternative, and what its ending is borrowed from. (*Kūṭṭukāran/kūṭṭukāri* — the -കാരൻ/-കാരി ending is from Sanskrit *kāra*, “maker.”)

35.3 ള — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ള — what does it do?

One character this time. One only — and it has been sitting in front of you on pages you have already read.

Script you’ll notice: ള

ള — *-ṛ*.

It is a **vowel sign**, not a letter — it never stands alone. It hangs off the bottom-right of a consonant and turns that consonant’s built-in *a* into a short *ṛ*.

You have read it twice already, once in a month-name and once in the word for a friend.

- വൃശ്ചികം *vr̥ścikam* — the month, met with the calendar
- സുഹൃത്തു *suhṛttū* — friend, met on the page before this one

In both, look at the consonant the little hook is fastened to: വ becomes *vr̥*, and ഹ — the *ha* you have read since the working-verbs chapter — becomes *hṛ*.

Writing: ് — copy what you see

Put your pen on ് and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ് in the ones that have it

വൃശ്ചികം · സുഹൃത്ത് · സഹായം

- *Trace it:* ് three times, saying -r as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ് once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ്? What sound does it carry? (-r.)
Does this mark stand on its own, or does it need a consonant to hang from?

Chapter 36

Child, Son, Daughter

Modes: ⇄ voice (3) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 3 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say child, son and daughter in Malayalam, and say which of the three matches Tamil most closely and which one Kannada softened.

Say ithu ente makalaanu, set makan/makal beside Tamil's identical makan/makal and Kannada's softened maga/magalu, and ask ninte makanu ethra vayassundu using Chapter 19's dative-subject question again.

36.1 കുട്ടി (kuṭṭi) — “child, kid,” the general word before the specific ones

Suhṛttū named someone you choose. This chapter turns to someone you don't — the people a family is built around.

What to know first

കുട്ടി — *kuṭṭi* — child, kid

ഇത് എന്റെ കുട്ടിയാണ്. — *ithu ente kuṭṭiyāṇū.* — “This is my child.”

കുട്ടി is the general word — any child, before you say whose son or daughter.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

കുട്ടി is native Dravidian, matching Tamil’s குட்டி (*kuṭṭi*) closely. Both languages let the same word cover two things: a human child, and the young of an animal — a പൂച്ചക്കുട്ടി (*pūccakkuṭṭi*) is a kitten, built on പൂച്ച, “cat,” met earlier in this book, the same way **kuṭṭi** attaches to any animal name for its young. English does something similar with “kid,” which covers both a child and a baby goat — one small word, carrying the same double duty in two unrelated language families.

Your turn

- *Say it:* “ithu ente kuṭṭiyāṇṭ” — this is my child
- *Say it:* the animal sense — “pūcca ... pūccakkuṭṭi” — cat, kitten
- *Say it:* the family and the friend, once more — “kuṭumbani ... suhṛttū”
- *Say it:* the six family people-words, and the group word — “acchan, amma ... kuṭumbani”
- *Recall:* say *cintikkuka*, then read മനസ്സിലാക്കുക

Before you move on

Say “this is my child.” (*Ithu ente kuṭṭiyāṇṭ*.) What two things can *kuṭṭi* mean? (**A human child**, or **the young of an animal** — like *pūccakkuṭṭi*, kitten.) Which English word carries the very same double duty? (**Kid**.) Name the six family people-words once more, and the group word none of them supplied. (*Acchan*, *amma*, *cēṭṭan*, *aniyan*, *cēcci*, *aniyatti* — and **kuṭumbani**.)

36.2 മക്കൾ (makan) — “son,” a word Tamil hardly changed at all

Kuṭṭi was the general word. Now the two specific ones — starting with the son.

What to know first

മകൻ — *makan* — son

ഇത് എന്റെ മകനാണ്. — *ithu ente makanāṇṭṭu*. — “This is my son.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

മകൻ continues **Proto-Dravidian *makan**, “son.” Tamil keeps almost the identical shape, **மகன்** (*makan*) — same consonants, same vowels, same final *-n*. Kannada moved further: the *-k-* between vowels softened to *-g-*, and the final *-n* dropped, giving **ಮಗ** (*maga*). So on this word it is Malayalam and Tamil that hold the older, more conservative shape, and Kannada that innovated — the same closeness the very first greetings already showed in *nandi*, *athe*, *illa* and *śari*, this time in a family word rather than a greeting.

Your turn

- *Say it*: “ithu ente makanāṇṭṭu” — this is my son
- *Say it*: the two cousins — “makan” (Malayalam, Tamil) ... “maga” (Kannada)
- *Say it*: general then specific — “kuṭṭi ... makan”
- *Say it*: the friend-word, once more — “suhṛttṭu” — su plus hṛd
- *Recall*: read വായിക്കുക

Before you move on

Say “this is my son.” (*Ithu ente makanāṇṭṭu*.) Which sister keeps almost the identical word? (**Tamil** — *makan*.) What did Kannada change? (**Softened *-k-* to *-g-*** and **dropped the final *-n***, giving *maga*.) What does *suhṛttṭu* literally mean? (“**Good-heart**” — *su* plus *hṛd*.)

36.3 മകൾ (makal) — “daughter,” the closest match yet

Makan matched Tamil closely. Its pair matches even closer — and gives you a reason to ask an old question again.

What to know first

മകൾ — *makal* — daughter

ഇത് എന്റെ മകളാണ്. — *ithu ente makalāṇṁ*. — “This is my daughter.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

മകൾ continues **Proto-Dravidian** **makal*, “daughter.” Tamil’s *மகள்* (*makal*) is not just close — it is **identical**, sound for sound. Kannada shows the same softening you just met in *maga*: *ಮಗಳು* (*magalu*), *-k-* to *-g-*, plus a closing *-u*. So where *makan/makan* was already a close match, *makal/makal* is the closer one still — two sisters holding one Proto-Dravidian root letter for letter, four thousand years and a script apart.

Now that you have a son and a daughter, the age question comes back with someone new to ask it about: **ninre makanṁ etra vayassuṇṭṭu?** — “how old is your son?” — the same dative-subject-plus-*uṇṭṭu* shape, unchanged.

Your turn

- *Say it*: “ithu ente makalāṇṁ” — this is my daughter
- *Say it*: the identical pair — “makal, makal” — Malayalam, Tamil
- *Say it*: son, daughter, both cousins — “makan ... maga; makal ... magalu”
- *Say it*: the age question, asked again — “ninre makanṁ etra vayassuṇṭṭu?”
- *Say it*: general, then specific, twice over — “kuṭṭi ... makan ... makal”
- *Recall*: say *elutuka*

Chapter 37

Face Words

Modes:  voice (4)  pen (1)  Hands-free start: first 4 of 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name my eye, ear, nose and mouth in Malayalam, and say which of the four the family agrees on almost completely and which one Kannada alone breaks from.

Name kannu, chevi, mookku and vaay, run the near-total four-way match on eye against chevi’s three-against-one split on ear, and recall that Chapter 33 already named vaay once only to rule it out of vaayikkuka.

37.1 കണ്ണ് (kaṇṇũ) — “eye,” the same word four times over

തല, കൈ — head and hand, taught long ago, and nothing more of the body since, twenty-four chapters ago. This chapter adds four words to that short list, starting above the nose.

What to know first

കണ്ണ് — kaṇṇũ — eye

എന്റെ കണ്ണ്. — ente kaṇṇũ. — “My eye.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

കണ്ണ് continues **Proto-Dravidian *kaṇ**, “eye.” Tamil கண் (kaṇ) sits right beside it; Telugu కన్ను (kannu) and Kannada ಕಣ್ಣು (kaṇṇu) sit

closer still, both almost identical to Malayalam’s own form. Four languages that otherwise pull apart on nearly everything — tense marking, half their everyday vocabulary, even the shape of their scripts — agree almost completely on this one word. It joins തല and കൈ, met earlier, as the third body word, and the first to show this exact, near-total four-way match.

Your turn

- *Say it:* “ente kaṇṇũ” — my eye
- *Say it:* the four sisters, nearly one word — “kaṇṇũ ... kaṇ ... kannu ... kaṇṇu”
- *Say it:* three body words now — “tala, kai, kaṇṇũ”
- *Say it:* family, then body — “makan, makaḷ ... kaṇṇũ”
- *Recall:* say eṭukkuka

Before you move on

Say “my eye.” (*Ente kaṇṇũ.*) Which three sisters come closest to matching Malayalam’s word? (**All three** — Tamil *kaṇ*, Telugu and Kannada both *ka(ṇ)ṇu* — a near-total four-way match.) Name the body words you have now. (*Thala*, head; *kai*, hand; *kaṇṇũ*, eye.) Name the previous chapter’s son and daughter words. (*Makan*, *makaḷ*.)

37.2 ചെവി (cevi) — “ear,” where Kannada is the odd one out

The four-way match on *kaṇṇũ* was close to perfect. This word breaks the pattern — but not the way you’d expect.

What to know first

ചെവി — *cevi* — ear

എന്റെ ചെവി. — *ente cevi.* — “My ear.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

ചെവി continues **Proto-Dravidian** **kewi*, “ear.” Tamil செவி (*cevi*) and Telugu చెవి (*cevi*) match Malayalam almost exactly — all three softened the old initial *k-* into a *c-/ch-* sound before this particular front vowel. **Kannada alone kept the older sound:** ಕಿವಿ (*kivi*), *k-* untouched. So this time it is not Malayalam standing apart from three sisters, the way *kuṭumbam*’s dressed *-am* did — it is Kannada, holding onto the sound the other three let go of.

Your turn

- *Say it:* “ente *cevi*” — my ear
- *Say it:* three softened, one not — “cevi, *cevi*, *cevi* ... *kivi*”
- *Say it:* two face words now — “kaṇṇū, *cevi*”
- *Say it:* the closest family match — “makal, makal” — Malayalam, Tamil
- *Recall:* read ചോദിക്കുക

Before you move on

Say “my ear.” (*Ente cevi.*) Which three sisters agree on this word, and which one differs? (**Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu** agree — **Kannada** alone keeps the older *k-* sound, *kivi*.) Why is that the reverse of what you might expect? (Usually Malayalam is the one that goes its own way; here Malayalam sides with the majority and **Kannada** is the outlier.) Which earlier word was identical between Malayalam and Tamil, sound for sound? (മകൾ, *makal*, daughter.)

37.3 മുക്ക് (*mūkkū*) — “nose,” and the same softening you met on “son”

Two face words down. This one brings back a sound-change from the last chapter, in a new place.

What to know first

മുക്ക് — *mūkkū* — nose

എന്റെ മുക്ക്. — *ente mūkkū*. — “My nose.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

മുക്ക് is native Dravidian, close to Tamil முக்கு (*mūkkū*) and Telugu ముక్కు (*mukku*). Kannada shows ಮೂಗು (*mūgu*) — the very same *-k-* to *-g-* softening you already met between Malayalam’s മകൻ and Kannada’s ಮಗ. It is a small, recurring signature: wherever Malayalam and Tamil hold a *-k-* between vowels, Kannada is likely to have worn it down to a *-g-*, whether the word is a family word or a body word.

Your turn

- *Say it:* “ente mūkkū” — my nose
- *Say it:* the recurring softening — “makan, maga ... mūkkū, mūgu”
- *Say it:* three face words — “kaṇṇū, cevi, mūkkū”
- *Say it:* three against one, once more — “cevi, cevi, cevi ... kivi”
- *Recall:* say *sahāyikkuka*

Before you move on

Say “my nose.” (*Ente mūkkū*.) What does Kannada’s ಮೂಗು (*mūgu*) show, that you already saw once before? (**The same *-k-* to *-g-* softening** as *makan* → *maga*.) Name the three face words so far. (*Kaṇṇū*, eye; *cevi*, ear; *mūkkū*, nose.) Which sister alone breaks the family’s agreement on *cevi*? (**Kannada**, *kivi*.)

37.4 വായ് (*vāy*) — “mouth,” the word an earlier lesson named only to rule out

Ñān malayāḷaṁ vāyikkunnu, “I read Malayalam” — and an earlier lesson told you the obvious-looking mouth-word inside it wasn’t really there. Here, at last, is the real one.

What to know first

വായ് — *vāy* — **mouth**

എന്റെ വായ്. — *ente vāy.* — “My mouth.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

വായ് is native Dravidian, matching Tamil **வாய்** (*vāy*) almost exactly. Kannada shows the family’s own **v-to-b** shift here, **ಬಾಯಿ** (*bāyi*) — the same shift, in reverse direction from the *k-to-c* softening *chevi* showed you, that turns up across the family’s native vocabulary. Telugu’s everyday word, **నోరు** (*nōru*), is a different root altogether.

An earlier lesson already put **വായ്** on the table once — as the wrong answer. **വായിക്കുക** (*vāyikkuka*, “to read”) looks built on this very word, and Gundert’s dictionary says it isn’t: the trail runs instead to Sanskrit **वच्** (*vac*), “to speak.” That lesson named *vāy* only to set it aside. This is the word itself, finally taught for what it actually means.

Your turn

- *Say it*: “ente vāy” — my mouth
- *Say it*: the cousins — “vāy ... bāyi ... nōru” — Malayalam/Tamil, Kannada, Telugu
- *Say it*: the false trail, named again — “vāyikkuka” is NOT built on “vāy”
- *Say it*: all four face words — “kaṇṇũ, cevi, mūkkũ, vāy”
- *Recall*: read കുടുംബം

Before you move on

Say “my mouth.” (*Ente vāy.*) Which earlier lesson already mentioned *vāy*, and why? (**The *vāyikkuka* lesson**, to rule out that *vāyikkuka*, “to read,” is built on it.) What does Kannada’s *bāyi* show? (**The family’s *v-to-b* shift.**) Name all four face words. (*Kaṇṇũ*, eye; *cevi*, ear; *mūkkũ*, nose; *vāy*, mouth.)

37.5 ੳ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: ੳ — what does it do?

One character this time. One only — and it has been sitting in front of you on pages you have already read.

Script you’ll notice: ੳ

ੳ — *tha*.

It is a **consonant** carrying its own *a* — the breathy partner of the ੲ you have read since the greetings, the way ੲ is the breathy partner of a *b*.

Two words already in your hands carry it, and both are Sanskrit-layer, which is the pattern this letter keeps.

- ੲੳੳੳ *kālāvastha* — weather
- ੲੳੳੳ *mithunam* — the month, met with the calendar

Hold ੲ and ੳ side by side and look at the middle of each shape — the breathy one carries an extra loop.

Writing: ੳ — copy what you see

Put your pen on ੳ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ੳ in the ones that have it
ੳੳੳੳ · ੲੳੳੳ · ੲੳੳ
- *Trace it:* ੳ three times, saying *tha* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ੳ once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — 𐌛? What sound does it carry? (*tha*.)
Which of 𐌚 and 𐌛 carries the puff of breath?

Chapter 38

The Two Hearts

Modes: 🗣️ voice (2) 🗋️ Hands-free start: all 2 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name my heart in Malayalam two ways, one Sanskrit and one native, and say which one everyday idiom actually uses and why hridayam is a genuine cousin of the English word heart.

Name hridayam and nenchu, place nenchidippu beside the santosham/nandi pattern from Chapter 2, and trace hridayam’s root to the same PIE ancestor as English heart.

38.1 ഹൃദയം (hṛdayam) — “heart,” a cousin of the English word

Suhṛttŭ, “friend,” was built on **hṛd**, “heart” — a piece promised, not yet taught. Here it is, whole.

What to know first

ഹൃദയം — *hṛdayam* — heart

എന്റെ ഹൃദയം. — *ente hṛdayam*. — “My heart.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

ഹൃദയം is Sanskrit हृदय (*hṛdaya*), “heart,” absorbed with the same nativizing -അം you already met on കൂടുംബം and ഇഷ്ടം. Its root, हृद् (*hṛd*), is not just Indo-Aryan but Indo-European: the same ancient

root that gave Greek **kardía**, Latin **cor/cordis**, and — by a long chain of regular sound changes inside Germanic — English **heart** itself. *Hṛdayam* and “heart” are genuine cousins, distant but real, through Sanskrit’s own branch of the family tree English belongs to. That resemblance is a coincidence of deep history, not of Malayalam’s own Dravidian family — Dravidian and Indo-European share no common ancestor at all.

Suhrttū, “friend,” is this very root wearing “good” in front of it — **su** + **hṛd**, good-heart.

Your turn

- *Say it*: “ente hṛdayam” — my heart
- *Say it*: the distant cousins — “hṛdaya ... kardía ... cor ... heart”
- *Say it*: the friend-word, taken apart again — “su + hṛd”
- *Say it*: mouth, then heart — “vāy ... hṛdayam”
- *Say it*: all the face words once more — “kaṇṇū, cevi, mūkkū, vāy”
- *Recall*: say *suhrttū*

Before you move on

Say “my heart.” (*Ente hṛdayam*.) Is *hṛdayam* a Dravidian word or a Sanskrit one? (**Sanskrit**, dressed in Malayalam’s own *-am*.) Name an English word that is a genuine, if distant, cousin of *hṛd*. (**Heart** — both from the same PIE root, by way of Greek *kardía* and Latin *cor*.) Which earlier word was built on this same root? (സുഹൃത്ത് — *su* “good” + *hṛd* “heart.”)

38.2 നെഞ്ച് (neñcū) — “chest,” Malayalam’s other heart

ഹൃദയം was borrowed, formal, and shared with English by deep ancestry. This chapter’s second word is none of those three things.

What to know first

നെഞ്ച് — *neñcũ* — chest

എന്റെ നെഞ്ച്. — *ente neñcũ.* — “My chest.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

നെഞ്ച് is native Dravidian, cognate with Tamil’s own **நெஞ்சு/நெஞ்சம்** (*nenju/nenjam*), “chest.” Where **ഹൃദയം** names the organ and carries the Sanskrit-flavoured abstraction — a “heartfelt” thank-you, a broken heart in the literary sense — നെഞ്ച് is the word everyday idiom actually reaches for: **നെഞ്ചിടിപ്പ്** (*neñciṭippũ*), a heart pounding from fear or excitement, literally “chest-beat.”

Two hearts, then: one Sanskrit and formal, one native and physical. That is the same selective-borrowing pattern **സന്തോഷം** beside **നന്ദി** already showed, back near the start of this book — Malayalam does not simply prefer Sanskrit or prefer native; it keeps both, and lets register decide which one a given sentence reaches for. **തല** and **കൈ**, this stretch’s first two body words, were native throughout; **ഹൃദയം** and **നെഞ്ച്** show the same body carrying one word of each kind, side by side.

Your turn

- *Say it:* “ente neñcũ” — my chest
- *Say it:* two hearts — “hṛdayaṁ,” formal; “neñcũ,” everyday
- *Say it:* the idiom — “neñciṭippũ” — chest-beat, a pounding heart
- *Say it:* tala, kai, hṛdayaṁ, neñcũ — the body words so far
- *Say it:* mouth, once more — “vāy”
- *Recall:* read കുട്ടി

Before you move on

Say “my chest.” (*Ente neñcũ.*) Which of this chapter’s two heart-words is native, and which is borrowed? (നെഞ്ച് native; ഹൃദയം Sanskrit.) What does *neñciṭippũ* mean, literally?

(“**Chest-beat**” — a pounding heart.) Which earlier pair showed this same native-plus-Sanskrit side-by-side pattern? (സഭനാഷം **beside** നന്ദി, back near the start of this book.)

Chapter 39

Tea, Coffee, Milk

Modes:  voice (3)  pen (1)  Hands-free start: first 3 of 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can politely ask for tea, coffee or milk in Malayalam, and trace each word back along the road it travelled to get here.

Ask dayavaayi oru paal, run chaaya's overland Persian route against kaapi's maritime Arabic-Turkish-Italian-English one, and set paal's perfect three-way match against Chapter 15's vellam, which broke from Tamil entirely.

39.1 ചായ (cāya) — “tea,” which walked to Kerala rather than sailed

Two hearts done. Now the drink you would politely ask for first, in any Kerala home — and a chance to put the polite ദയവായി back to work.

What to know first

ചായ — *cāya* — tea

ദയവായി ഒരു ചായ. — *dayavāyi oru cāya*. — “A tea, please.”

Dayavāyi has been yours since early in this book; *oru*, “a/one,” you have already met attached to *nāl* and *maṇi*.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

ചായ traces to Northern Chinese **chá**, carried overland along Central Asian trade routes into Persian چای (*chāy*), and from there into Hindi-Urdu *chāy* and Malayalam *cāya* alike — the same land route most of North and South India took for their word for tea. Tea that instead reached Europe by **sea** kept a different, southern Chinese form, which is why English says **tea** and French says *thé* — one leaf, two roads: chai by land, tea by sea.

Grammar Lens: the two hearts, and the spine node so far

ദയവായി ഒരു ചായ leans on the very dative already named, **-ikku/-inu** — the same suffix beside Tamil’s *-ukku*, Telugu’s *-ku*, and Kannada’s *-ge*. This chapter carries both halves of the spine node ദയവായി and ഹൃദയം/നെഞ്ച് already opened: asking politely, and — if you ask for the wrong thing — repairing with ക്ഷമിക്കണം.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “dayavāyi oru cāya” — a tea, please
- the road — “chá ... chāy ... cāya”
- land against sea — “chai ... tea”
- please, once more, and its plainer everyday form — “dayavāyi ... irikkū”
- two hearts, once more — “hṛdayam ... neñcū”

Before you move on

Ask for tea, politely. (*Dayavāyi oru cāya.*) Name the three languages *cāya* passed through, in order. (**Chinese**, then **Persian**, then **Hindi-Urdu**, into Malayalam.) Why does English say “tea” instead of “chai”? (**It arrived by sea**, carrying a different Chinese form.) Which dative suffix does *dayavāyi ... enikkū* share with Tamil, Telugu and Kannada? (**The dative** — *-ikku/-ukku/-ku/-ge*.) What is the repair half of this spine node’s word pair?

(ക്ഷമിക്കണം, sorry.)

39.2 കാപ്പി (kāppi) — “coffee,” which sailed while tea walked

Chāya travelled overland. This drink took the opposite road — and arrives from further away.

What to know first

കാപ്പി — *kāppi* — coffee

ദയവായി ഒരു കാപ്പി. — *dayavāyi oru kāppi*. — “A coffee, please.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

കാപ്പി comes from **English** *coffee*, borrowed during the colonial period and reshaped to Malayalam’s own consonants and vowels. English’s own word for the drink is itself a loan, several times over: Arabic قهوة (*qahwah*) became Turkish **kahve**, then Italian **caffè**, then English *coffee*, before finally landing in Kerala as **kāppi**.

Set the two drinks side by side: ചായ walked overland from China, through Persia, into North and South Indian speech alike. കാപ്പി sailed from Arabia, through Ottoman Turkey and Renaissance Italy, into English, and only then into Malayalam. Two drinks, two opposite roads — one over land, one over sea — meeting on the very same tea-shop counter.

Your turn

- *Say it*: “dayavāyi oru kāppi” — a coffee, please
- *Say it*: the long road — “qahwah ... kahve ... caffè ... coffee ... kāppi”
- *Say it*: two drinks, two roads — “cāya,” overland; “kāppi,” by sea
- *Say it*: two hearts, still — “hṛdayaṁ ... neñcū”
- *Recall*: read മകൻ

Before you move on

Ask for coffee, politely. (*Dayavāyi oru kāppi.*) Which language did Malayalam borrow *kāppi* directly from? (**English.**) Name the four languages the word passed through before that. (**Arabic, Turkish, Italian, English.**) Which of this chapter’s two drinks travelled by land, and which by sea? (*Chāya* by **land**; *kāppi* by **sea.**)

39.3 പാൽ (pāl) — “milk,” where Tamil agrees completely

വെള്ളം, the earlier water-word, broke away from Tamil’s water-word entirely. This drink, the third in the chapter, does the opposite.

What to know first

പാൽ — *pāl* — milk

ദയവായി ഒരു പാൽ. — *dayavāyi oru pāl.* — “A milk, please.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

പാൽ is native Dravidian, from **Proto-South-Dravidian** **pāl*, “milk.” Tamil keeps the shape **unchanged**: பால் (*pāl*), letter for letter the same as Malayalam. Kannada shows its own regular **p-to-h** sound law here too, giving ಹಾಲು (*hālu*) — the identical shift that turns Malayalam’s *pōkuka* into Kannada’s *hōgu*.

Set beside the water-word’s finding, this is the mirror image: വെള്ളം (water) broke from Tamil’s *nīr* entirely, choosing a completely different root; പാൽ (milk) shows the opposite — perfect three-way agreement in shape, with only Kannada’s regular sound law setting its form apart. Two everyday liquids, two entirely different outcomes.

Your turn

- *Say it*: “dayavāyi oru pāl” — a milk, please
- *Say it*: unchanged, then shifted — “pāl ... pāl ... hālu” — Malayalam, Tamil, Kannada

- *Say it*: water against milk — “veḷḷam broke away; pāl agrees”
- *Say it*: three drinks, once more — “cāya, kāppi, pāl”
- *Say it*: the long road, once more — “qahwah ... kahve ... caffè ... kāppi”
- *Recall*: say *makal*, then read കണ്ണ

Before you move on

Ask for milk, politely. (*Dayavāyi oru pāl.*) Does Tamil’s word for milk match Malayalam’s? (**Yes** — **exactly**, *pāl* both.) What does Kannada’s *hālu* show? (**The regular p-to-h law.**) Which earlier liquid word broke from Tamil entirely, unlike this one? (വെള്ളം, water.)

39.4 ഗ — one character, met inside words you already say

Before the new one: റ — what does it do?

One character this time. One only — and it has been sitting in front of you on pages you have already read.

Script you’ll notice: ഗ

ഗ — *ga*.

It is a **consonant** carrying its own *a* — the voiced partner of ക *ka*. Put your fingers on your throat and say *ka*, then *ga*: the second one hums.

This one is different from the seven before it: no word you have met so far is written with it. It is being put into your hand early, so that the day a word like *anugrahami* (a blessing) arrives, the shape is already familiar and only the meaning is new.

Two shapes stand close to it, and both are ones you can already read:

- ക *ka* — the very first letter of this book’s script ladder; ഗ is what it sounds like with the voice switched on
- ങ — the humming pair inside നിങ്ങൾ *ninnal*, a different letter and a different sound

Say *ka* · *ga* twice over, then look at the two shapes again.

Writing: ഴ — copy what you see

Put your pen on ഴ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these words, and find ഴ in the ones that have it

ക · ഴ · നിങ്ങൾ

- *Trace it:* ഴ three times, saying *ga* as you finish each one
- *Look:* back at any page of this chapter and find ഴ once more

Before you move on

Which character is this — ഴ? What sound does it carry? (*ga.*)
Which of ക and ഴ hums in the throat?

Chapter 40

The Meal

Modes: 👁 eyes (1) ⇌ Hands-free start: all 1 lesson.

By the end of this chapter: I can say I am having a meal in Malayalam, using a second eat-verb this book never taught until now, and close the polite-request-and-repair stretch that dayavaayi opened eight chapters ago.

Say njaan oon unnunnu against Chapter 32's tinnunnu, say enikku oon ishtamaanu on Chapter 6's dative and Chapter 34's frame, and name kshamikkanam as the repair half of the spine node dayavaayi's asking half opened.

40.1 ഉൺ (ūṇ) — “a meal,” the word that closes this stretch’s table

An earlier chapter taught തിന്നുക, “to eat,” for anything at all. It never taught the word for a proper, sit-down meal. Here it is.

What to know first

ഉൺ — *ūṇ* — a meal

ഞാൻ ഉൺ ഉണ്ണുന്നു. — *ñān ūṇ unṇunnu.* — “I am having a meal.”

The letters in this word

ഊ is the **independent** long-*ū* vowel — the shape a word uses when it *opens* with this sound and there is no consonant in front of it to carry the small sign ു instead. It is the same kind of independent vowel letter as the very first inherent-*a* opening; the sound only changes shape depending on what, if anything, comes before it.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

ഊൺ is native Dravidian, sharing its root with the verb ഉണ്ണുക (*uṇṇuka*), “to eat a meal” — a second eat-verb this book has never taught, standing beside the everyday തിന്നുക. The difference is the same one English makes between “eating” in general and “having a meal”: *tinnuka* covers a snack, a fruit, anything at all; *uṇṇuka* names sitting down to the real thing.

Tamil’s cognate ഉணவு (*uṇavu*) generalised the very same root all the way to “food” itself. Kannada’s ഈട (*ūṭa*) narrowed it to “a meal,” matching Malayalam’s own ഈൺ sense for sense — three sisters, one Proto-Dravidian root, three different landing points.

Grammar Lens: the stretch this chapter closes

എനിക്ക് ഊൺ ഇഷ്ടമാണ്. — *enikkū ūṇ iṣṭamāṇū*. — “I like having a meal” — the familiar dative **-ikku**, the *iṣṭam* liking-frame, one more turn of the same machine.

This chapter closes the spine node ദയവായി opened: ദയവായി asks; ക്ഷമിക്കണം repairs, the word for showing up after the ഊൺ is already over. And **-ikku** is still the same cousin of Tamil’s **-ukku**, Telugu’s **-ku**, and Kannada’s **-ge** that was first named earlier in this book.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “ñān ūṇ uṇṇunnu” — I am having a meal
- everyday against a proper meal — “tinnunnu ... uṇṇunnu”
- “enikkū ūṇ iṣṭamāṇū” — I like having a meal
- ask, then repair — “dayavāyi ... kṣamikkaṇaṁ”

- this chapter’s three drinks and its meal — “cāya, kāppi, pāl ... ūṇ”

Before you move on

Say “I am having a meal.” (*Ñān ūṇ uṇṇunnu.*) How does *uṇṇuka* differ from the everyday *tinnuka*? (*Tinnuka* is **eating in general**; *uṇṇuka* is **having a proper meal**.) What are the two halves this spine node runs between? (ദയവായി asks; ക്ഷമിക്കണം repairs.)

Chapter 41

Pointing, and Asking

Modes: ⇄ voice (7) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 7 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can point at something in Malayalam and ask who or where it is — and I can say what the six words have in common.

Say the near word, the far word and the question word in a row, and name the part that changed.

41.1 ഇത് (itŭ) — this one — the thing near me

You can already name things. This is how you POINT at them.

You'll want to know: ഇത്

ഇത് — *itŭ* — this one — the thing near me.

Say it, and point while you say it. That is the whole word: it does not mean anything on its own, it means whatever your finger is on.

Its partner is അത് *atŭ*, which you will meet in a moment. The two of them differ by one sound at the front — **i-** for near — and that is not a coincidence. It is the whole system, and the last lesson of this chapter says so.

Your turn

- *Say it:* “ഇത്” three times, pointing at something different each time
- *Say it:* it once with a word you already know after it

- *Recall:* say *cevi*, then read മുക്ക്

Before you move on

What is *itŭ*? (this one — the thing near me.) What sound does it start with, and does that sound mean near, far, or a question? (**i-** — near.)

41.2 അത് (atŭ) — that one — the thing over there

You can already name things. This is how you POINT at them.

You'll want to know: അത്

അത് — *atŭ* — that one — the thing over there.

Say it, and point while you say it. That is the whole word: it does not mean anything on its own, it means whatever your finger is on.

Its partner is ഇത് *itŭ*, which you will meet just now. The two of them differ by one sound at the front — **a-** for far — and that is not a coincidence. It is the whole system, and the last lesson of this chapter says so.

Your turn

- *Say it:* “അത്” three times, pointing at something different each time
- *Say it:* it once with a word you already know after it
- *Recall:* read വായ്

Before you move on

What is *atŭ*? (that one — the thing over there.) What sound does it start with, and does that sound mean near, far, or a question? (**a-** — far.)

41.3 ഇവിടെ (ivite) — here — where I am

You can already name things. This is how you POINT at them.

You'll want to know: ഇവിടെ

ഇവിടെ — *ivite* — here — where I am.

Say it, and point while you say it. That is the whole word: it does not mean anything on its own, it means whatever your finger is on.

Its partner is അവിടെ *avite*, which you will meet in a moment. The two of them differ by one sound at the front — **i-** for near — and that is not a coincidence. It is the whole system, and the last lesson of this chapter says so.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “ഇവിടെ” three times, pointing at something different each time
- it once with a word you already know after it

Before you move on

What is *ivite*? (here — where I am.) What sound does it start with, and does that sound mean near, far, or a question? (**i-** — near.)

41.4 അവിടെ (avite) — there — where I am not

You can already name things. This is how you POINT at them.

You'll want to know: അവിടെ

അവിടെ — *avite* — there — where I am not.

Say it, and point while you say it. That is the whole word: it does not mean anything on its own, it means whatever your finger is on.

Its partner is ഇവിടെ *ivite*, which you will meet just now. The two of them differ by one sound at the front — **a-** for far — and that is not a coincidence. It is the whole system, and the last lesson of this chapter says so.

Your turn

- *Say it*: “അവിടെ” three times, pointing at something different each time

- *Say it*: it once with a word you already know after it
- *Recall*: read ഏദയം

Before you move on

What is *avite*? (there — where I am not.) What sound does it start with, and does that sound mean near, far, or a question? (**a**- — far.)

41.5 ആർ (*ārũ*) — who? — asking about a person

You can already name things. This is how you POINT at them.

You'll want to know: ആർ

ആർ — *ārũ* — who? — asking about a person.

Say it, and point while you say it. That is the whole word: it does not mean anything on its own, it means whatever your finger is on.

Its partner is എവിടെ *evite*, which you will meet in a moment. The two of them differ by one sound at the front — **e**- for ask — and that is not a coincidence. It is the whole system, and the last lesson of this chapter says so.

Your turn

- *Say it*: “ആർ” three times, pointing at something different each time
- *Say it*: it once with a word you already know after it
- *Recall*: say *neñcũ*

Before you move on

What is *ārũ*? (who? — asking about a person.) What sound does it start with, and does that sound mean near, far, or a question? (**e**- — ask.)

41.6 എവിടെ (evīṭe) — where? — asking about a place

You can already name things. This is how you POINT at them.

You'll want to know: എവിടെ

എവിടെ — *evīṭe* — where? — asking about a place.

Say it, and point while you say it. That is the whole word: it does not mean anything on its own, it means whatever your finger is on.

Its partner is ആര് *ārū*, which you will meet just now. The two of them differ by one sound at the front — **e-** for ask — and that is not a coincidence. It is the whole system, and the last lesson of this chapter says so.

Your turn

- *Say it*: “എവിടെ” three times, pointing at something different each time
- *Say it*: it once with a word you already know after it
- *Recall*: read ചായ, then say *kāppi*

Before you move on

What is *evīṭe*? (where? — asking about a place.) What sound does it start with, and does that sound mean near, far, or a question? (**e-** — ask.)

41.7 i- / a- / e- — six words, one machine

Say the six words from this chapter out loud, in order. Listen to how they begin.

Grammar lens: one slot changes

You did not learn six words. You learned **three beginnings** and reused them.

meaning	word
near	ഇവിടെ <i>ivite</i>
far	അവിടെ <i>avite</i>
question	എവിടെ <i>evite</i>

Malayalam spells the pattern out longest — ഇവിടെ, അവിടെ, എവിടെ — which makes it the easiest to hear.

Change the front, and the meaning walks from **near** to **far** to a **question**. Nothing else in the word moves.

The same three beginnings run the thing-words too: ഇത് *itŭ* and അത് *atŭ* start exactly like the first two rows. This chapter did not teach you the matching question word for things — that one arrives later, and when it does you will already know what it has to start with. This is worth more than the six words are. When you meet a new word in this family later, you will not have to be taught all three of it — you will be taught one and work out the others.

Your turn

- *Say it*: the near word, then the far word, then the question word
- *Say it*: them again for place, not for things
- *Notice*: the part that did NOT change

Before you move on

Which beginning means near? (i-) Far? (a-) And which one turns the word into a question? (e-)

Chapter 42

Describing Things

Modes: ⇄ voice (6) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 6 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can point at something in Malayalam and ask who or where it is — and I can say what the six words have in common.

Say the near word, the far word and the question word in a row, and name the part that changed.

42.1 വലിയ (valiya) — big

You can already name things. This is how you POINT at them.

You'll want to know: വലിയ

വലിയ — *valiya* — big.

Put it in front of a word you already know and you have said something new. That is all an adjective does in this language.

The last lesson of this chapter gives the one rule that governs every adjective you will ever meet here.

Your turn

- *Say it:* “വലിയ” three times, pointing at something different each time
- *Say it:* it once with a word you already know after it
- *Recall:* say *pāl*

Before you move on

What is *valiya*? (**big.**) Where does it go — before the word it describes, or after? (**Before.**)

42.2 ചെറിയ (*ceriya*) — small

You can already name things. This is how you POINT at them.

You'll want to know: ചെറിയ

ചെറിയ — *ceriya* — small.

Put it in front of a word you already know and you have said something new. That is all an adjective does in this language.

You met വലിയ *valiya* a moment ago. Put them side by side and nothing about either one changes.

The last lesson of this chapter gives the one rule that governs every adjective you will ever meet here.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- “ചെറിയ” three times, pointing at something different each time
- it once with a word you already know after it

Before you move on

What is *ceriya*? (**small.**) Where does it go — before the word it describes, or after? (**Before.**)

42.3 നല്ല (*nalla*) — good

You can already name things. This is how you POINT at them.

You'll want to know: നല്ല

നല്ല — *nalla* — good.

Put it in front of a word you already know and you have said something new. That is all an adjective does in this language.

You met ചെറിയ *ceriya* a moment ago. Put them side by side and nothing about either one changes.

The last lesson of this chapter gives the one rule that governs every adjective you will ever meet here.

Your turn

- *Say it*: “നല്ല” three times, pointing at something different each time
- *Say it*: it once with a word you already know after it
- *Recall*: say *un*

Before you move on

What is *nalla*? (**good.**) Where does it go — before the word it describes, or after? (**Before.**)

42.4 പുതിയ (putiya) — new

You can already name things. This is how you POINT at them.

You'll want to know: പുതിയ

പുതിയ — *putiya* — new.

Put it in front of a word you already know and you have said something new. That is all an adjective does in this language.

You met നല്ല *nalla* a moment ago. Put them side by side and nothing about either one changes.

The last lesson of this chapter gives the one rule that governs every adjective you will ever meet here.

Your turn

- *Say it*: “പുതിയ” three times, pointing at something different each time

- *Say it:* it once with a word you already know after it
- *Recall:* read ഇത്

Before you move on

What is *putiya*? (**new.**) Where does it go — before the word it describes, or after? (**Before.**)

42.5 പഴയ (*palaya*) — old — of a thing, not of a person

You can already name things. This is how you POINT at them.

You'll want to know: പഴയ

പഴയ — *palaya* — old — of a thing, not of a person.

Put it in front of a word you already know and you have said something new. That is all an adjective does in this language.

You met പുതിയ *putiya* a moment ago. Put them side by side and nothing about either one changes.

The last lesson of this chapter gives the one rule that governs every adjective you will ever meet here.

Your turn

- *Say it:* “പഴയ” three times, pointing at something different each time
- *Say it:* it once with a word you already know after it
- *Recall:* say *atŭ*, then read ഇവിടെ

Before you move on

What is *palaya*? (**old — of a thing, not of a person.**) Where does it go — before the word it describes, or after? (**Before.**)

42.6 before the noun, unchanged — five words, one rule

Say the five words from this chapter out loud, then say each one in front of a noun you already know.

Grammar lens: where an adjective goes

You did not learn five separate words. You learned **where an adjective goes**, and five words that go there.

meaning	word
big	വലിയ <i>valiya</i>
small	ചെറിയ <i>ceriya</i>
good	നല്ല <i>nalla</i>

Every one ends in -a, sits in front of the noun, and never changes. This is worth more than the five words are. Every noun you already know — your name, the house, the water, the day — can now take any of them in front, and every adjective you meet from here goes in the same place.

Your turn

- *Say it:* each of the five in front of a noun you already know
- *Say it:* two of them with the same noun, one after the other
- *Notice:* whether the adjective changed shape when the noun did

Before you move on

Where does an adjective go in this language? (**In front of the noun.**) Does it change shape to match the noun? (unchanged.)

Chapter 43

More Everyday Verbs

Modes: 🗣️ voice (4) 🗣️ Hands-free start: all 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can tell someone to come, sit, stand and give in Malayalam.

Complete ML-C43-give and say all four verbs in order.

43.1 ഓടൂ (ōṭū) — run

A short run of everyday verbs, one at a time.

You'll want to know: ഓടൂ

ഓടൂ (ōṭū) — “run”.

The long final *ū* softens a command into an invitation — Malayalam marks courtesy in the verb ending itself.

What you've built

One more everyday action. Three more follow, and each reuses the ones before it.

Your turn

- *Say it:* ōṭū
- *Say it:* it again, to someone standing in a doorway
- *Recall:* say *aviṭe*

Before you move on

What does ഓടൂ mean? (“run”.) Say it once more.

43.2 ഉറങ്ങൂ (*uraṅṅū*) — sleep

Before the new one: what did *ōṭū* mean?

You’ll want to know: ഉറങ്ങൂ

ഉറങ്ങൂ (*uraṅṅū*) — “sleep”.

Same softening vowel — said to a child at night rather than as an order.

What you’ve built

One more everyday action. Three more follow, and each reuses the ones before it.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *uraṅṅū*
- *Say it:* it again, to someone standing in a doorway
- *Say it:* it after *ōṭū*, so the two sit together
- *Recall:* read ആർ

Before you move on

What does ഉറങ്ങൂ mean? (“sleep”.) Say it once more.

43.3 നിൽക്കൂ (*nilkkū*) — stand

Before the new one: what did *uraṅṅū* mean?

You’ll want to know: നിൽക്കൂ

നിൽക്കൂ (*nilkkū*) — “stand”.

Its pair, with the same courteous ending.

What you've built

One more everyday action. Three more follow, and each reuses the ones before it.

Your turn

- *Say it: nilkkū*
- *Say it: it again, to someone standing in a doorway*
- *Say it: it after uraṇṇū, so the two sit together*
- *Recall: say eviṭe*

Before you move on

What does നിൽക്കൂ mean? (“stand”.) Say it once more.

43.4 തരൂ (tarū) — give

Before the new one: what did *nilkkū* mean?

You'll want to know: തരൂ

തരൂ (*tarū*) — “give”.

‘Give — to me.’ Malayalam distinguishes giving toward the speaker from giving away; this is the toward-me one.

What you've built

One more everyday action. That closes the run: four everyday actions, each met on its own.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *tarū*
- *it again, to someone standing in a doorway*
- *it after nilkkū, so the two sit together*

Before you move on

What does തരൂ mean? (“give”.) Say it once more.

Chapter 44

Verbs of Seeing and Saying

Modes: ⇄ voice (4) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can tell someone to look, listen, speak and write in Malayalam.

Complete ML-C44-write and say all four verbs in order.

44.1 നോക്കൂ (nōkkū) — look

Four verbs for taking things in and putting them out, one at a time.

You'll want to know: നോക്കൂ

നോക്കൂ (nōkkū) — “look”.

The same *nōkk-* stem as Kannada's *nōḍu*, with Malayalam's courteous long *ū* on the end.

What you've built

One more. Three follow, and each reuses the ones before.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *nōkkū*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Recall:* say *valiya*

Before you move on

What does നോക്കു mean? (“look”.) Say it once more.

44.2 കേൾക്കു (kēḷkkū) — listen

Before the new one: what did *nōkkū* mean?

You’ll want to know: കേൾക്കു

കേൾക്കു (*kēḷkkū*) — “listen”.

And Kannada’s *kēḷu* again. Malayalam separated from Tamil later than the others, but this stem is older than any of the splits.

What you’ve built

One more. Three follow, and each reuses the ones before.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *kēḷkkū*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* it after *nōkkū*, so the two sit together
- *Recall:* read ചെറിയ

Before you move on

What does കേൾക്കു mean? (“listen”.) Say it once more.

44.3 സംസാരിക്കു (saṁsārikkū) — speak

Before the new one: what did *kēḷkkū* mean?

You’ll want to know: സംസാരിക്കു

സംസാരിക്കു (*saṁsārikkū*) — “speak”.

From Sanskrit *saṁsāra* — literally ‘going around together’. The everyday Malayalam word for conversing is a Sanskrit compound, which is how much of the language’s formal vocabulary arrived.

What you’ve built

One more. Three follow, and each reuses the ones before.

Your turn

- *Say it: saṁsārikkū*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: it after kēḷkkū, so the two sit together*
- *Recall: say nalla*

Before you move on

What does സംസാരിക്കൂ mean? (“speak”). Say it once more.

44.4 എഴുതു (eḷutū) — write

Before the new one: what did *saṁsārikkū* mean?

You’ll want to know: എഴുതു

എഴുതു (eḷutū) — “write”.

From *eḷuttu*, ‘letter’ — the writing verb is built from the thing written, which is the reverse of how Kannada does it.

What you’ve built

That closes the run: look, listen, speak, write.

Your turn

- *Say it: eḷutū*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: it after saṁsārikkū, so the two sit together*

- *Recall:* read പുതിയ

Before you move on

What does എഴുത mean? (“write”.) Say it once more.

Chapter 45

Grandparents, and the Married Pair

Modes: 🗣️ voice (4) 🗋️ Hands-free start: all 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name four more family and people words in this language.

Complete ML-C45-wife and say all four words in order.

45.1 മുത്തച്ഛൻ (muttacchan) — grandfather

Before the new one: what did *elutū* mean?

You'll want to know: മുത്തച്ഛൻ

മുത്തച്ഛൻ (*muttacchan*) — “grandfather”.

Two pieces, both audible: *mutta*-, ‘elder, senior’, and *acchan*, the ‘father’ from the family lesson. Literally, an elder father. Where Sanskrit would reach for a compound of its own, Malayalam assembles this one out of words the learner already owns.

What you’ve built

The first of four family words. Three follow, and each reuses the ones before.

Your turn

- *Say it: muttacchan*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly, hearing the two halves
- *Say it:* it after *elutū*, so the two sit together
- *Recall:* say *palaya*

Before you move on

What does മുത്തച്ഛൻ mean? (“grandfather”). Say it once more.

45.2 മുത്തശ്ശി (muttaśśi) — grandmother

Before the new one: what did *muttacchan* mean?

You’ll want to know: മുത്തശ്ശി

മുത്തശ്ശി (*muttaśśi*) — “grandmother”.

The same *mutta-* opens it, so half the word is already yours. The second half is not as transparent as the grandfather word’s: *-aśśi* is an old term of address for an elder woman rather than the everyday *amma* you already know, and dictionaries stop short of a confident breakdown. Better to flag that than to pretend the two halves match.

What you’ve built

Two of four, and one honest gap in the analysis.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *muttaśśi*
- it once more, slowly
- it after *muttacchan*, and name the half they share

Before you move on

What does മുത്തശ്ശി mean? (“grandmother”.) Say it once more.

45.3 ഭർത്താവ് (bharttāvũ) — husband

Before the new one: what did *muttaśśi* mean?

You’ll want to know: ഭർത്താവ്

ഭർത്താവ് (*bharttāvũ*) — “husband”.

Sanskrit *bhartṛ* with a Malayalam ending, *-āvũ*, fitted onto it. Inside sits the root *bhr̥*, ‘to bear, to carry, to support’, so the word says ‘the one who supports’. The root is old enough to have relatives well outside India: Latin *fero*, ‘I carry’, and English *bear* both continue it.

What you’ve built

Three of four. The last word grows from the same root.

Your turn

- *Say it: bharttāvũ*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: it after muttaśśi, so the two sit together*
- *Recall: say õṭũ*

Before you move on

What does ഭർത്താവ് mean? (“husband”.) Say it once more.

45.4 ഭാര്യ (bhārya) — wife

Before the new one: what did *bharttāvũ* mean?

You'll want to know: భార్య

భార్య (*bhārya*) — “wife”.

The same root *bhṛ* as the last word, ending differently: ‘she who is to be supported’. Telugu borrowed the identical pair from Sanskrit, so *bhartā* and *bhārya* there are these two words again, wearing local endings. What the pair records is Sanskrit’s older picture of a household, not a modern one — worth saying out loud rather than smoothing over.

What you’ve built

That closes the run: grandfather, grandmother, husband, wife.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *bhārya*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* it after *bharttāvũ*, and name the root they share
- *Recall:* read భార్య

Before you move on

What does భార్య mean? (“wife”.) Say it once more.

Chapter 46

Things You Ask For

Modes: ⇄ voice (5) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name five everyday things I might ask someone for in Malayalam, and say which of them the language has held all along and which walked in from elsewhere.

Complete ML-C46-book and say all five words in order.

46.1 പഴം (pa_lam̐) — a fruit

Before the new run of words: what did *bharttāvũ* mean, and what did *bhārya* mean?

You’ll want to know: പഴം

പഴം (*pa_lam̐*) — “a fruit”.

Behind the fruit sits a verb of ripening. Proto-Dravidian ***pal**, ‘to ripen, to grow old’, handed this family both a fruit and an age, and Malayalam kept the pair close enough that a learner can still hear it: പഴയ (*pa_laya*), the “old” from the run of adjectives, is that same root wearing an adjective ending.

Tamil says பழம் (*pa_lam*), which is very nearly the identical word — the ordinary state of affairs between these two closest sisters. Telugu went to పండు (*paṇḍu*) and Kannada to ಹಣ್ಣು (*haṇṇu*), and the Kannada form has lost its opening *p*- to a shift Malayalam sat out entirely.

The **ഴ** in the middle is the letter this book has already called Malayalam’s own oddity, the one only these two sisters still write.

What you've built

The first of five things you might ask someone for.

Your turn

- *Say it: palam*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: palam, then dayavāyi palam tarū* — “please give a fruit”
- *Recall: say nilkkū*

Before you move on

What does പഴം mean? (“a fruit”.) Say it once more.

46.2 തുണി (tuni) — cloth

Before the new one: what did *palam* mean?

You'll want to know: തുണി

തുണി (*tuni*) — “cloth”.

തുണി is the plain, unceremonious word: the bolt on the shelf, the washing on the line, the rag in your hand. Tamil writes துணி (*tuni*) and means the same thing.

Malayalam holds a dressier word for the same stuff — വസ്ത്രം (*vas-tram*), out of Sanskrit — and it turns up on a wedding invitation rather than over a washing line. The native word does the daily work; the borrowed one does the ceremony.

That division of labour is worth watching for, because it repeats through this book: two words, one meaning, and the register telling them apart.

What you've built

Two: a fruit and a cloth.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *tun̥i*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *pal̥am̥*, then *tun̥i*, and ask for each one with *dayavāyi*
- *Recall:* read തരൂ

Before you move on

What does തൂണി mean? (“cloth”.) Say it once more.

46.3 വിളക്ക് (viḷakkŭ) — a lamp

Before the new one: what did *tun̥i* mean?

You’ll want to know: വിളക്ക്

വിളക്ക് (*viḷakkŭ*) — “a lamp”.

A native word, built on a root about shining. Tamil விளக்கு (*viḷakku*) is the same word, and in both languages a related sense — making something clear, shining a light on it — sits alongside the object.

The object itself has a particular shape in Kerala: the നിലവിളക്ക് (*nilaviḷakkŭ*), the tall standing brass lamp lit at a doorway on an occasion. Its first piece is നില (*nila*), the ground it stands on.

Kannada reached for a borrowed word here, ದೀಪ (*dīpa*) from Sanskrit, where Malayalam kept its own. Malayalam has ദീപം (*dīpam*) as well, in temple and festival senses, which leaves the everyday lamp to the older resident.

What you’ve built

Three. A fruit, a cloth, a lamp.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *viḷakkŭ*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly

- *Say it:* *viḷakkũ*, then *tun̄i*, and hear which of the two is the older resident
- *Recall:* say *nōkkū*

Before you move on

What does വിളക്ക് mean? (“a lamp”.) Say it once more.

46.4 ഉപ്പ് (uppũ) — salt

Before the new one: what did *viḷakkũ* mean?

You’ll want to know: ഉപ്പ്

ഉപ്പ് (*uppũ*) — “salt”.

Proto-Dravidian ***uppu**, and the whole family kept it very nearly untouched: Tamil ഉപ്പ, Telugu ఉప్పు, Kannada ಉಪ್ಪು. Four sisters, one word, four spellings of it.

There is a *p* sitting inside this word, and in Kannada it did not turn into an *h* the way the *p* of its fruit-word did. The shift that separated ಹಣ್ಣ from പഴം reached only the FIRST sound of a word. Inside one, the *p* stays where it was put — which is why salt looks so alike on all four sides of the family.

The final ് here is the half-vowel this book romanizes *-ũ*: a consonant let go of rather than cut off.

What you’ve built

Four. Salt, and the fruit, and the cloth, and the lamp.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *uppũ*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *uppũ*, then *palami*, and notice the *p* the cousins kept in one word and lost in the other
- *Recall:* read കേൾക്കൂ

Before you move on

What does ഉപ്പ് mean? (“salt”.) Say it once more.

46.5 പുസ്തകം (pustakam) — a book

Before the new one: what did *uppū* mean?

You’ll want to know: പുസ്തകം

പുസ്തകം (*pustakam*) — “a book”.

Sanskrit *pustaka*, taken whole. Tamil புத்தகம், Telugu పుస్తకం and Kannada ಪುಸ್ತಕ are the same borrowing, so the four sisters agree here for a different reason than they agree about salt: not descent, but a shared debt.

Sanskrit itself seems to have taken it from further west. The usual trail runs to Persian *post*, a hide or a skin — the material a book was, before it was paper. A word for the animal became a word for the page.

Malayalam also says *grantham* for a book of weight and age, another Sanskrit word, and that one is built on a root about knotting: palm leaves tied into a bundle. Two borrowings, two different pictures of what a book physically was.

What you’ve built

Five, and the run is closed: a fruit, a cloth, a lamp, salt, a book.

Your turn

- *Say it: pustakam*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: all five in order — palam, tuṇi, viḷakkū, uppū, pustakam*
- *Recall: say samisārikkū*

Before you move on

What does പുസ്തകം mean? (“a book”.) Say it once more.

Chapter 47

The Leg and the Tooth

Modes: ⇐ voice (5) ⇐ Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name five more parts of the body in Malayalam, and point to the sound exchanges that separate them from their Tamil, Telugu and Kannada cousins.

Complete ML-C47-stomach and say all five words in order.

47.1 കാൽ (kāl) — leg, foot

Before the new run of words: what did *uppū* mean, and what did *pustakani* mean?

You'll want to know: കാൽ

കാൽ (*kāl*) — “leg, foot”.

Proto-Dravidian **kāl*, and every sister kept it nearly whole: Tamil കാൽ, Telugu కాలు, Kannada ಕಾಲ. Malayalam alone stops the word dead on its *l*.

That final ൽ is a chillu — a consonant written with no vowel after it and no virama under it, given a letter of its own. This book has already taught one of them, the ൽ inside നിങ്ങൾ. ൽ is its plainer neighbour.

കാൽ covers the whole limb, foot and leg together. It also names a quarter — a fourth of anything — so a quarter of a rupee and the leg you stand on are written the same way. Nothing joins them but an accident of sound, and context is the only fix, which is what context is for.

What you've built

The first of five more body words.

Your turn

- *Say it: kāl*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: kāl, then kaṇṇū, so the bottom and the top sit together*
- *Recall: say elutū*

Before you move on

What does കാൽ mean? (“leg, foot”.) Say it once more.

47.2 പല്ല് (pallŭ) — a tooth

Before the new one: what did *kāl* mean?

You'll want to know: പല്ല്

പല്ല് (*pallŭ*) — “a tooth”.

Proto-Dravidian ***pal**, another word the family barely touched: Tamil பல், Telugu పల్లు, Kannada ಹಲ್ಲ.

Kannada is the odd one again, and for the reason already met with the fruit — an opening *p* that became *h*. Set ಹಲ್ಲ beside പല്ല and the only real difference is that first letter. Telugu did something else altogether, turning the *l* into an *n*.

Malayalam doubles the *l* and then lets the word go with the half-vowel, the same ending as the salt-word.

What you've built

Two body words: a leg and a tooth.

Your turn

- *Say it: pallŭ*

- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *kāl*, then *pallū*, and hear the doubled letter in the second
- *Recall:* read മുത്തച്ഛൻ

Before you move on

What does പല്ല് mean? (“a tooth”.) Say it once more.

47.3 മുടി (muṭi) — hair

Before the new one: what did *pallū* mean?

You’ll want to know: മുടി

മുടി (*muṭi*) — “hair”.

The everyday word for the hair on a head. Tamil முடி (*muṭi*) is the same word, and in both languages it keeps company with a sense of finishing or topping off — the crown of a thing as well as what grows there.

Kannada took a different route entirely, ಕೂದಲು (*kūḍalu*), which Tamil also has as கூந்தல் (*kūntal*) for long hair worn loose. So the family has two hair-words and the sisters split over which one became the ordinary one.

Malayalam keeps രോമം (*rōmaṁ*), a Sanskrit word, for hair on the body rather than the head — a second case of a borrowing taking the narrower job.

What you’ve built

Three. A leg, a tooth, hair.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *muṭi*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *muṭi*, then *tala*, so the head and what grows on it sit together
- *Recall:* say *muttaśśi*

Before you move on

What does മുടി mean? (“hair”.) Say it once more.

47.4 വിരൽ (viral) — a finger

Before the new one: what did *muṭi* mean?

You’ll want to know: വിരൽ

വിരൽ (*viral*) — “a finger”.

Proto-Dravidian ***viral**, and Tamil விரல் (*viral*) matches Malayalam letter for letter, chillu and all.

Kannada has ಬೆರಳು (*beraḷu*), where the opening *v*- has hardened into a *b*-. That exchange runs the other way through the family often enough to be worth naming: a *v* at the front of a Kannada word is frequently a *b*, and this is one of the clearest cases. Telugu walked away from the root and says వేలు (*vēlu*).

The word ends in the same chillu ൾ as the leg-word, two chapters’ worth of body parts stopping on the same letter.

What you’ve built

Four. A leg, a tooth, hair, a finger.

Your turn

- *Say it: viral*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: viral, then kāl, and hear the same chillu close both*
- *Recall: read ഭർത്താവ്*

Before you move on

What does വിരൽ mean? (“a finger”.) Say it once more.

47.5 വയറ് (vayarǔ) — the stomach, the belly

Before the new one: what did *viral* mean?

You’ll want to know: വയറ്

വയറ് (*vayarǔ*) — “the stomach, the belly”.

Native, and Tamil வயிறு (*vayiru*) is again the near-twin. The two sisters agree on the belly where the other two do not: Kannada says ಹೊಟ್ಟೆ (*hotṭe*) and Telugu పొట్ట (*poṭṭa*), a pair that plainly belong together and just as plainly do not belong with this one.

So on a single body the family sorts itself twice over. Leg, tooth and finger run back to one shared ancestor; the belly splits the four into two camps of two.

The ends of these words are worth a moment as well. This one closes on റ്റ, the hard *r* with the half-vowel after it.

What you’ve built

Five, and the run is closed: a leg, a tooth, hair, a finger, a belly.

Your turn

- *Say it: vayarǔ*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: all five in order — kāl, pallǔ, muṭi, viral, vayarǔ*
- *Recall: say bhārya*

Before you move on

What does വയറ് mean? (“the stomach, the belly”.) Say it once more.

Chapter 48

Who Someone Is

Modes: ⇌ voice (5) ⇌ Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say what someone’s work is in Malayalam, and recognise the masculine ending that three of the five words share.

Complete ML-C48-guest and say all five words in order.

48.1 അധ്യാപകൻ (adhyāpakan) — a teacher

Before the new run of words: what did *viral* mean, and what did *vayarũ* mean?

You’ll want to know: അധ്യാപകൻ

അധ്യാപകൻ (*adhyāpakan*) — “a teacher”.

Sanskrit *adhyāpaka*, ‘one who causes another to study’, with a Malayalam ending fastened on: the chillu ന് that marks a masculine noun and that this book has already met at the end of മകൻ and മുത്തച്ഛൻ.

The Sanskrit word is itself built out of a going-toward: *adhi* plus a root about approaching, so a teacher is the one who brings the student up to the text.

Kannada picked a different Sanskrit word for the same job, ಶിಕ್ಷക (śikṣaka). Two sisters, two borrowings, one classroom — which is a fair picture of how these languages have handled Sanskrit generally: not one loan, but a choice among several.

What you've built

The first of five words for who someone is.

Your turn

- *Say it: adhyāpakan*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: adhyāpakan, then makan, and hear the same chillu close both*
- *Recall: say palam*

Before you move on

What does അധ്യാപകൻ mean? (“a teacher”.) Say it once more.

48.2 വിദ്യാർത്ഥി (vidyārtthi) — a student

Before the new one: what did *adhyāpakan* mean?

You'll want to know: വിദ്യാർത്ഥി

വിദ്യാർത്ഥി (*vidyārtthi*) — “a student”.

Two Sanskrit pieces, and both are legible once pointed at: *vidyā*, ‘knowledge’, and *arthin*, ‘one who seeks’. A student is a knowledge-seeker, said outright.

Kannada has ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿ (*vidyārthi*), the identical borrowing. Where the teacher-words parted company, the student-words did not.

There is a chillu here too, the ൾ in the middle, doing the same job as the ൾ of the leg-word: a consonant with no vowel after it, given its own shape rather than a mark underneath.

What you've built

Two: a teacher and a student.

Your turn

- *Say it: vidyārtthi*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*

- *Say it: adhyāpakan*, then *vidyārthi*, the pair that need each other
- *Recall: read* തുണി

Before you move on

What does വിദ്യാർത്ഥി mean? (“a student”.) Say it once more.

48.3 വൈദ്യൻ (vaidyan) — a doctor

Before the new one: what did *vidyārthi* mean?

You’ll want to know: വൈദ്യൻ

വൈദ്യൻ (vaidyan) — “a doctor”.

The same *vidyā* as the last word, stretched into an adjective: *vaidya* is ‘the one versed in the knowledge’, and the knowledge meant is the medical one. Then the masculine chillu ന് again.

Kannada has ವೈದ್ಯ (*vaidya*) without that ending. Malayalam adds it; Kannada leaves the Sanskrit word standing as it came.

In a Kerala street today the word usually points at a practitioner of the traditional medicine, and the everyday word for a hospital doctor is the English one, worn down into Malayalam sounds. Both live side by side, which is worth saying rather than tidying away.

What you’ve built

Three. A teacher, a student, a doctor.

Your turn

- *Say it: vaidyan*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: vidyārthi*, then *vaidyan*, and find the piece they share
- *Recall: say* വിറക്കൂ

Before you move on

What does വൈദ്യൻ mean? (“a doctor”.) Say it once more.

48.4 കർഷകൻ (karṣakan) — a farmer

Before the new one: what did *vaidyan* mean?

You'll want to know: കർഷകൻ

കർഷകൻ (*karṣakan*) — “a farmer”.

Sanskrit *karṣaka*, from a root about dragging or drawing — the plough pulled through the ground. The farmer is named for the furrow rather than for the crop.

The ending is the chillu ന് once more, the third of these role-words to take it, and the ി near the front is the same chillu as in the student-word. Two of them in one short word.

Kannada went elsewhere again and says ರೈತ (raita), a word that came into the language along a different road entirely.

What you've built

Four. A teacher, a student, a doctor, a farmer.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *karṣakan*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *karṣakan*, then *adhyāpakan*, and count the chillus in each
- *Recall:* read ഉപ്പ്

Before you move on

What does **കർഷകൻ** mean? (“a farmer”.) Say it once more.

48.5 അതിഥി (atithi) — a guest

Before the new one: what did *karṣakan* mean?

You'll want to know: ಅತಿಥಿ

ಅತಿಥಿ (*atithi*) — “a guest”.

Sanskrit *atithi*, and Kannada ಅತಿಥಿ is the identical word — the same borrowing arriving in both languages unchanged.

The traditional analysis inside Sanskrit takes it apart as *a-* plus *tithi*, a lunar day: the one who has no appointed day, who turns up unannounced. Whether the etymology is historically right is argued over; what matters is that Sanskrit itself understood the word that way, and built a whole ethic of hospitality on it.

This word takes no masculine ending. It sits on the other side of the chapter from the four before it.

What you've built

Five, and the run is closed: a teacher, a student, a doctor, a farmer, a guest.

Your turn

- *Say it: atithi*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: all five in order — adhyāpakan, vidyārthi, vaidyan, karṣakan, atithi*
- *Recall: say pustakam*

Before you move on

What does ಅತಿಥಿ mean? (“a guest”.) Say it once more.

Chapter 49

Short Replies

Modes: 🗣️ voice (5) 🖱️ Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can answer with five short replies in Malayalam, from a flat agreement to a hedge.

Complete ML-C49-just-so and say all five words in order.

49.1 സത്യം (satyam) — true, the truth

Before the new run of words: what did *karṣakan* mean, and what did *atithi* mean?

You’ll want to know: സത്യം

സത്യം (*satyam*) — “true, the truth”.

Sanskrit *satya*, built on *sat*, ‘being, that which is’. Truth, in that word’s picture, is simply what is the case — a noun made out of the verb ‘to be’.

Malayalam already has ശരി (*śari*) for the everyday “right, okay” of a conversation. സത്യം is the heavier one: not ‘that will do’ but ‘that is so’.

Kannada answers with ನಿಜ (*nija*), a different Sanskrit word, whose older sense is ‘one’s own, innate’. Two languages, two borrowings, and each picked a different picture of what being true is.

What you’ve built

The first of five short replies.

Your turn

- *Say it: satyam*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it: satyam*, then *śari*, and hear the weight shift between them
- *Recall:* say *kāl*

Before you move on

What does സത്യം mean? (“true, the truth”.) Say it once more.

49.2 മതി (mati) — enough, that will do

Before the new one: what did *satyam* mean?

You’ll want to know: മതി

മതി (*mati*) — “enough, that will do”.

Two syllables that make a whole sentence. Hand someone rice and they say മതി and nothing else, and the exchange is complete.

Malayalam has a small handful of these — words that are already a finished utterance and take no verb, no subject and no ending. This book has met one before in ഇല്ല.

Dictionaries connect മതി with a root about measuring and reckoning; the connection is plausible rather than settled, and it is more honest to leave it that way than to tidy it. Kannada says ಸಾಕು (*sāku*), which is not this word at all.

What you’ve built

Two replies: true, and enough.

Your turn

- *Say it: mati*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it: mati*, then *illa*, two words that each finish a sentence alone

- *Recall:* read പല്ല

Before you move on

What does മതി mean? (“enough, that will do”.) Say it once more.

49.3 തീർച്ചയായും (tīrccayāyum) — certainly, for sure

Before the new one: what did *mati* mean?

You’ll want to know: തീർച്ചയായും

തീർച്ചയായും (*tīrccayāyum*) — “certainly, for sure”.

A long word, and every piece of it is Malayalam’s own. തീർച്ച (*tīrcca*) is ‘a settling, a thing decided’, off the verb തീരുക, ‘to come to an end’. Add the adverb-making tail and the whole says ‘in a settled way’.

Kannada reaches for ഖಂಡിത (*khaṇḍita*) here, Sanskrit for ‘cut, broken off’. The two languages arrived at the same idea from the same direction — a matter is certain once it has been finished off — but one built the word at home and one imported it.

There is a chillu റ inside, the third chapter running to end up leaning on one.

What you’ve built

Three. True, enough, certainly.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *tīrccayāyum*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *tīrccayāyum*, slowly, then *satyam*, and put the long word beside the short one
- *Recall:* say *muṭi*

Before you move on

What does തീർച്ചയായും mean? (“certainly, for sure”.) Say it once more.

49.4 ഒരുപക്ഷേ (orupakṣē) — perhaps

Before the new one: what did *tīrccayāyumi* mean?

You’ll want to know: ഒരുപക്ഷേ

ഒരുപക്ഷേ (*orupakṣē*) — “perhaps”.

Take it apart and it says “on one side”. ഒരു (*oru*) is the *one* you met leaning on a noun — the shape ഒന്ന് takes when something follows it. പക്ഷം (*pakṣam*) is Sanskrit for a side, a wing, one of the alternatives on offer.

So a Malayalam speaker hedges by naming a side rather than by naming a doubt. The word is half native, half borrowed, and joined so smoothly that the seam is easy to miss.

Kannada hedges with ಬಹുಶಃ (*bahuśaḥ*), a wholly Sanskrit word meaning something closer to ‘in many ways’. Same job, different picture again.

What you’ve built

Four. True, enough, certainly, perhaps.

Your turn

- Say it: *orupakṣē*
- Say it: it once more, slowly
- Say it: *orupakṣē*, then *tīrccayāyumi*, the hedge and the promise
- Recall: read വിരൽ

Before you move on

What does ഒരുപക്ഷേ mean? (“perhaps”.) Say it once more.

49.5 അങ്ങനെ (aṅṇane) — that way, just so

Before the new one: what did *orupakṣē* mean?

You'll want to know: ಅರಣ್ಯ

ಅರಣ್ಯ (*arṇane*) — “that way, just so”.

This one the book has half-taught already. The chapter on pointing laid out a pattern: *i-* for what is near, *a-* for what is far, *e-* for what is being asked about. ಅರಣ್ಯ (*arṇane*), ‘how?’, was the question member of exactly this set.

Swap its opening for the far one and the question becomes an answer. ಅರಣ್ಯ is ‘that way’ — the manner just spoken of, agreed to.

Kannada does the same trick with ಹಾಗೆ (*hāge*), built on its own far-pointer. The machinery is inherited; each sister runs it with her own parts.

What you’ve built

Five, and the run is closed: true, enough, certainly, perhaps, just so.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *arṇane*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* all five in order — *satyaṁ, mati, tīrccayāyumi, orupakṣē, arṇane*
- *Recall:* say *vayarũ*

Before you move on

What does ಅರಣ್ಯ mean? (“that way, just so”.) Say it once more.

Chapter 50

Taking Leave

Modes: ⇄ voice (6) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 6 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say when I am going and take my leave in Malayalam, using either of the two phrases the language builds for it.

Complete ML-C50-farewell and say all five words in order.

50.1 ഇപ്പോൾ (ippōl) — now

Before the new run of words: what did *orupakṣē* mean, and what did *arīriane* mean?

You’ll want to know: ഇപ്പോൾ

ഇപ്പോൾ (*ippōl*) — “now”.

The pointing pattern again, and this time on time rather than manner. *i-* is the near one, so ഇപ്പോൾ is ‘at this time’. Its far partner അപ്പോൾ (*appōl*) is ‘at that time, then’, and the two differ by one letter.

Tamil says இப்போது (*ippōtu*) — the same two pieces, put together the same way.

The word ends on ൾ, the chillu already met at the end of നിങ്ങൾ. Kannada’s word for now, ಈಗ (*īga*), is built from its own near-pointer and shares nothing else with this one.

What you’ve built

The first of five words for going away.

Your turn

- *Say it: ippōl*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: ippōl*, then *annane*, and hear the near and the far openers side by side
- *Recall: say adhyāpakan*

Before you move on

What does ഇപ്പോൾ mean? (“now”.) Say it once more.

50.2 മറന്നാൾ (marrannāl) — the day after tomorrow

Before the new one: what did *ippōl* mean?

You’ll want to know: മറന്നാൾ

മറന്നാൾ (*marrannāl*) — “the day after tomorrow”.

Three pieces, and the last of them this book has already taught: നാൾ, the native day-word. Before it sits മറ്റ് (*marrŭ*), ‘other’, and a middle piece pointing at a particular day. Put together: the other day along.

Malayalam does not stop there. There is a word for the day after that one as well, and speakers use it without ceremony, where an English speaker would give up and name a date.

Kannada builds its own with the same idea and different parts, ನಾಡಿದ್ದു (*nāḍiddu*), and its day-word is the cousin of ours.

What you’ve built

Two: now, and the day after tomorrow.

Your turn

- *Say it: marrannāl*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*

- *Say it: ippōl*, then *marrannāl*, the nearest time and a far one
- *Recall:* read വിദ്യാർത്ഥി

Before you move on

What does മറ്റന്നാൾ mean? (“the day after tomorrow”.) Say it once more.

50.3 പറയുക (parayuka) — the verb behind the goodbye

Say *ñān cintikkunnu*. One word for the present, whoever is doing it.

Today’s verb runs on the same machine, and you have met it before without being told what it was.

What to know first

പറയുക — *parayuka* — to say, to tell

ഞാൻ പറയുന്നു. — *ñān parayunnu* — “I say.”

Past പറഞ്ഞു (*paraññu*), future *parayuni*. And like *cintikkunnu*, പറയുന്നു is the whole present tense — one word for *ñān*, *nī* and *avar* alike.

You have met this verb once already without being told. The politeness chapter printed *parayū*, “please tell me” — the respectful request form, stem plus -യൂ. The stem under it is today’s word.

It arrives here because the rest of this chapter needs it: Malayalam does not have a single word for *to say goodbye*. It names the thing being given — a journey, a leave — and hangs this verb off it.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

പറ (*para*) is the stem, and the റ in it is the hard *r* — made further back in the mouth than the ordinary *r*, and one of the letters this script keeps apart where English has a single shape.

Where the other three verbs in this strand came from Sanskrit nouns — *cintikkuka* from ചിന്ത, *cōdikkuka* from a Sanskrit word for pushing

— this one did not. പഠ is a native Dravidian stem, and it is the one this language reaches for when somebody speaks, with no other job attached.

-ഉക (-*uka*) is the dictionary ending you have seen on every verb in this book: *ariyuka*, *cintikkuka*, *cōdikkuka*, *cērkkuka*.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *parayuka ... ñān parayunnu*
- *ñān cintikkunnu* and *ñān parayunnu* one after the other
- which part of those two words is the same, and what it does
- the request form from the politeness chapter — *parayū*

Before you move on

What is *to say*? (***Parayuka***.) What is *I say*? (***Ñān parayunnu***.) Does that form change when somebody else is the one saying? (**No** — one present tense for everybody.) Which ending does it share with every other verb in this book? (**-ഉക**.)

50.4 യാത്ര (yātra) — a journey

Before the new one: what did *marrannāl* mean?

You'll want to know: യാത്ര

യാത്ര (*yātra*) — “a journey”.

Sanskrit *yātrā*, off a root meaning simply ‘to go’. A journey is a going, with a noun ending on it.

Malayalam then does something with the word that Sanskrit did not: യാത്ര പറയുക, literally ‘to say journey’, is how a speaker takes leave of a household. The noun for travelling became the verb phrase for saying goodbye, because what you announce at the door is that you are going.

Kannada’s ಪ್ರయాಣ (*prayāṇa*) is the same root with a prefix in front of it — a going-forth. The sisters borrowed from the same shelf and reached for neighbouring jars.

What you’ve built

Three. Now, the day after tomorrow, a journey.

Your turn

- *Say it: yātra*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: yātra, then yātra parayuka, the noun and the leave-taking built on it*
- *Recall: say vaidyan*

Before you move on

What does യാത്ര mean? (“a journey”). Say it once more.

50.5 പുറപ്പെടുക (purappetuka) — to set out

Before the new one: what did *yātra* mean?

You’ll want to know: പുറപ്പെടുക

പുറപ്പെടുക (*purappetuka*) — “to set out”.

A compound with its seam showing. പുറം (*puram*) is ‘the outside, the back’; Tamil has புறம் with the same sense. The second piece is the ordinary verb of falling or happening. Together, roughly, ‘to come to be outside’ — which is what setting out is.

Malayalam builds a great many verbs this way, a noun and a light verb sitting next to each other, and this book has already shown one: the work-verb made of ‘work’ plus ‘do’.

Kannada says ಹೊರಡು (*horaḍu*), built on its own outside-word, and that word begins with the *h* where ours begins with a *p*. The shift turns up again.

What you’ve built

Four. Now, the day after tomorrow, a journey, setting out.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *purappetuka*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *purappetuka*, then *jōli ceyyuka*, two verbs built the same way
- *Recall:* read കർഷകൻ

Before you move on

What does പുറപ്പെടുക mean? (“to set out”.) Say it once more.

50.6 വിട (viṭa) — leave, a farewell

Before the new one: what did *purappetuka* mean?

You’ll want to know: വിട

വിട (*viṭa*) — “leave, a farewell”.

A short word off a plain verb: വിടുക (*viṭuka*) is ‘to let go, to release’. വിട is the letting-go itself.

And it is used exactly as the journey-word was: വിട പറയുക, ‘to say farewell’. Malayalam has two ways to announce a departure, one naming the going and one naming the release, and both are built by hanging the speaking-verb off a noun.

Kannada’s word here, ಬಿಳ್ಕೊಡುಗೆ (*bīḷkoḍuge*), is longer and made of its own native parts — a giving of leave. Three languages could hardly agree less on how to say goodbye, and each of them is transparent once opened.

What you’ve built

Five, and the run is closed: now, the day after tomorrow, a journey, setting out, a farewell.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *viṭa*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* all five in order — *ippōl*, *marrannāl*, *yātra*, *purappetuka*, *viṭa*

- *Recall:* say *atithi*

Before you move on

What does **विस** mean? (“leave, a farewell”.) Say it once more.

Chapter 51

Courtesy

Modes: 🗣️ voice (5) 🖐️ Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can thank, respect and bless in the formal Malayalam register, and say how each word differs from its everyday partner.

Complete ML-C51-salutation and say all five words in order.

51.1 കൃതജ്ഞത (kṛtajñata) — gratitude

Before the new run of words: what did *purappetuka* mean, and what did *viṭa* mean?

You'll want to know: കൃതജ്ഞത

കൃതജ്ഞത (*kṛtajñata*) — “gratitude”.

Sanskrit again, and legible once opened: *kṛta* is ‘done’, *jñā* is ‘knowing’. The grateful person is the one who knows what was done for them.

Malayalam already has നന്ദി (*nandi*) for the everyday thank-you, and that one is the family’s own. So the pair here is the pattern this book keeps meeting: a native word for the ordinary moment and a Sanskrit one for the formal register, the letter, the speech.

Kannada has ಕೃತಜ್ಞತೆ (*kṛtajñate*), the same borrowing with a Kannada ending. Where the formal register is concerned the sisters agree far more often than they do in the kitchen.

What you’ve built

The first of five courtesies.

Your turn

- *Say it: kṛtajñata*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: kṛtajñata, then nandi, the formal and the everyday*
- *Recall: say satyam*

Before you move on

What does കൃതജ്ഞത mean? (“gratitude”.) Say it once more.

51.2 ഉപകാരം (upakārami) — a favour, a good turn

Before the new one: what did *kṛtajñata* mean?

You’ll want to know: ഉപകാരം

ഉപകാരം (*upakārami*) — “a favour, a good turn”.

Upa is ‘near, alongside’; *kāra* is ‘a doing’. A favour is a doing-alongside — help brought up close.

The word carries a polite adverb with it in daily speech, an ‘as a kindness’ shaped much like the ദയവായി this book taught for ‘please’. Both are courtesies built by turning a noun sideways into an adverb, which is a habit worth noticing rather than learning one word at a time.

Kannada has ಉಪಕಾರ (*upakāra*), the same word once more.

What you’ve built

Two: gratitude, and a favour.

Your turn

- *Say it: upakārami*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: upakārami, then dayavāyi, two courtesies made the same way*
- *Recall: read മതി*

Before you move on

What does ഉപകാരം mean? (“a favour, a good turn”.) Say it once more.

51.3 ബഹുമാനം (bahumānām) — respect

Before the new one: what did *upakāraṁ* mean?

You’ll want to know: ബഹുമാനം

ബഹുമാനം (*bahumānām*) — “respect”.

Bahu is ‘much’; *māna* is ‘regard, esteem’. To respect is to regard much, and the Sanskrit says so plainly.

That *māna* runs back to a root about thinking, and the same root gives Sanskrit its word for the mind. Malayalam took that mind-word too: it is sitting inside മനസ്സിലാക്കുക, the ‘put it in the mind’ this book used for understanding. Respect and understanding share an ancestor.

Kannada does not use this word for respect; it says ಗೌരവ (gaurava), which is built on ‘heavy’. Regarding much, or weighing much — the two sisters chose different metaphors off the same shelf.

What you’ve built

Three. Gratitude, a favour, respect.

Your turn

- *Say it: bahumānām*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: bahumānām, then manassilākkuka, and find the piece they share*
- *Recall: say tīrccayāyuni*

Before you move on

What does ബഹുമാനം mean? (“respect”.) Say it once more.

51.4 അനുഗ്രഹം (anugrahaṁ) — a blessing

Before the new one: what did *bahumānami* mean?

You'll want to know: അനുഗ്രഹം

അനുഗ്രഹം (*anugrahaṁ*) — “a blessing”.

Anu is ‘after, along’; *graha* is ‘a taking hold’. A blessing is a taking-hold on someone’s behalf — favour laid on with a hand.

That *graha* is a busy word. ഗ്രഹം in Malayalam is a planet, and it is the same noun: in the older astronomy a planet was a seizer, something that took hold of a life. One root, a blessing at one end and a planet at the other.

Kannada blesses with ಆಶീർവാദ (*āśīrvāda*), a different Sanskrit compound built on speech rather than on grasp. A blessing said, against a blessing laid on.

What you’ve built

Four. Gratitude, a favour, respect, a blessing.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *anugrahaṁ*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *anugrahaṁ*, then *bahumānami*, both of them things given rather than taken
- *Recall:* read ഒരുപക്ഷേ

Before you move on

What does അനുഗ്രഹം mean? (“a blessing”.) Say it once more.

51.5 വന്ദനം (vandanam) — a salutation

Before the new one: what did *anugrahaṁ* mean?

You'll want to know: വന്ദനം

വന്ദനം (*vandanam*) — “a salutation”.

Off a Sanskrit root about praising and saluting. വന്ദനം is the act of paying respects, and it is the word on a printed invitation rather than in a doorway.

The doorway word this book taught first was നമസ്കാരം, and its own sense is a making of a bow. So Malayalam holds two Sanskrit nouns for what is nearly one physical act: the bend of the body, and the honour paid by it.

Kannada has ವಂದನೆ (*vandane*), and its own everyday greeting is built on that first word as well. The sisters furnished their doorways from the same shop.

What you've built

Five, and the run is closed: gratitude, a favour, respect, a blessing, a salutation.

Your turn

- *Say it: vandanam*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: all five in order — kṛtajñata, upakāram, bahumānam, anugraham, vandanam*
- *Recall: say aññane*

Before you move on

What does വന്ദനം mean? (“a salutation”.) Say it once more.

Chapter 52

Welcoming a Guest

Modes: 🗣️ voice (5) 🖱️ Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name the five things a guest meets at a Kerala doorway in Malayalam.

Complete ML-C52-garland and say all five words in order.

52.1 വാതിൽ (vātil) — a door

Before the new run of words: what did *anugrahami* mean, and what did *vandanami* mean?

You'll want to know: വാതിൽ

വാതിൽ (*vātil*) — “a door”.

Tamil writes its door-word വാ‍യിൽ (*vāyil*), and once you see it beside വാ‍യ് — the mouth this book has already taught — the picture is hard to unsee. A doorway is the mouth of a house.

Malayalam’s വാതിൽ is the same word with a *t* where Tamil has a *y*, and the dictionaries connect the two. The mouth-word itself, വായ്, sits in this book’s chapter on the face.

Kannada says ಬಾಗಿಲು (*bāgilu*), which is a different word altogether. The chillu ൽ at the end here is the same one that closed the leg-word and the finger-word.

What you’ve built

The first of five things a guest meets at the door.

Your turn

- *Say it: vātil*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: vātil, then vāy, and hear what a doorway is named for*
- *Recall: say ippōl*

Before you move on

What does വാതിൽ mean? (“a door”.) Say it once more.

52.2 കസേര (kasēra) — a chair

Before the new one: what did *vātil* mean?

You’ll want to know: കസേര

കസേര (*kasēra*) — “a chair”.

Portuguese *cadeira*, come ashore on the Malabar coast and settled. Kerala’s Portuguese layer is thick and domestic: the table, the cupboard and the window in an ordinary Malayalam room are all Portuguese words worn into Malayalam shapes — മേശ (*mēśa*), അലമാര (*alamāra*), ജനൽ (*janal*).

Furniture travels with the people who make it, and the vocabulary of a room records who was in it. This is one of the few places in this book where the trail is only five centuries long instead of five thousand.

Kannada’s കുರ್ಚി (*kurci*) is a chair too, and it arrived from the north along an entirely different road.

What you’ve built

Two: a door, and a chair.

Your turn

- *Say it: kasēra*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: kasēra, then vātil, the way in and the seat beyond it*

- *Recall:* read മറ്റുനാൾ

Before you move on

What does കസേര mean? (“a chair”.) Say it once more.

52.3 കോലം (kōlam) — the pattern drawn at a doorway

Before the new one: what did *kasēra* mean?

You’ll want to know: കോലം

കോലം (*kōlam*) — “the pattern drawn at a doorway”.

Native Dravidian, and its plain sense is ‘form, shape, guise’. The pattern chalked on the ground at a threshold is a shape laid down, and Tamil uses കോലம் for the same thing.

The word keeps its wider life alongside the drawing: a person in costume, an animal’s markings, anything that has taken on a form, can be a കോലം.

Kannada names the same threshold drawing ರಂಗೋಲಿ (*raṅgōli*), a word built on Sanskrit colour. One sister named the practice for its shape and the other for its pigment.

What you’ve built

Three. A door, a chair, the pattern at the threshold.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *kōlam*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *kōlam*, then *vātil*, and put the drawing back where it is drawn
- *Recall:* say *yātra*

Before you move on

What does കോലം mean? (“the pattern drawn at a doorway”.) Say it once more.

52.4 പൂവ് (pūvũ) — a flower

Before the new one: what did *kōlani* mean?

You’ll want to know: പൂവ്

പൂവ് (*pūvũ*) — “a flower”.

Proto-Dravidian ***pū**, one of the shortest words the family has and one of the best kept: Tamil பூ, Telugu పువ్వు, Kannada ಹೂವು. Kannada’s *h* is that opening shift again, met first at the fruit.

Kerala puts the word to work at the front of a compound: the flower-carpet laid out for the harvest festival is പൂക്കളം, the flower plus a word for a laid-out ground.

Malayalam’s own form adds a *v* and the half-vowel, which is why it looks longer than Tamil’s bare two letters while saying the same thing.

What you’ve built

Four. A door, a chair, the pattern at the threshold, a flower.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *pūvũ*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *pūvũ*, then *kōlani*, the two things laid at a doorway
- *Recall:* read പൂറപ്പെടുക

Before you move on

What does പൂവ് mean? (“a flower”.) Say it once more.

52.5 മാല (māla) — a garland

Before the new one: what did *pūvũ* mean?

You'll want to know: ಮಂಜು

ಮಂಜು (*māla*) — “a garland”.

Sanskrit *mālā*, a garland or a string of things, borrowed all across the south. Kannada's ಹೂಮಾಲೆ (*hūmāle*) is this word with the flower-word stuck on the front of it, so the Kannada compound spells out what Malayalam leaves to context.

The word is also a string in the abstract — a series, a row — which is why a rosary and a necklace and a list can all be one.

And that closes the door: the way in, the seat, the pattern on the ground, the flower and the garland. A guest arriving at a Kerala house in the old way would meet all five before a word was exchanged.

What you've built

Five, and the run is closed: a door, a chair, the pattern at the threshold, a flower, a garland.

Your turn

- *Say it: māla*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: all five in order — vāṭil, kasēra, kōlami, pūvū, māla*
- *Recall: say viṭa*

Before you move on

What does ಮಂಜು mean? (“a garland”.) Say it once more.

Chapter 53

Overhead

Modes: ⇄ voice (5) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name the sky and four things in it in Malayalam.

Complete ML-C53-sunshine and say all five words in order.

53.1 ആകാശം (ākāśam) — the sky

Before the new run of words: what did *pūvū* mean, and what did *māla* mean?

You’ll want to know: ആകാശം

ആകാശം (ākāśam) — “the sky”.

Sanskrit *ākāśa*, built on a piece meaning “to shine, to be visible”. The sky is named there for being the open lit place where a thing can be seen at all, rather than for being a lid over the world.

Malayalam keeps an inherited word for the same overhead space, വാനം (*vānam*), which owes Sanskrit nothing. The two divide the work between them: ആകാശം takes the ordinary shift and turns up in weather talk, while വാനം keeps to songs and to verse. A borrowed word taking the daily job and leaving the older one the ceremony is an arrangement this book has shown you before, at the doorway.

ākāśa travelled as well. Traders carried it east, and Malay and Indonesian still say *angkasa* for the sky.

What you've built

The space the rest of this run hangs in.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *ākāśam*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *ākāśam*, then *namaskāram*, as you would greet somebody out of doors
- *Recall:* say *kṛtajñata*

Before you move on

What does ആകാശം mean? (“the sky”). Say it once more.

53.2 സൂര്യൻ (sūryan) — the sun

Before the new one: what did *ākāśam* mean?

You'll want to know: സൂര്യൻ

സൂര്യൻ (*sūryan*) — “the sun”.

Sanskrit *sūrya*, wearing the Malayalam chillu ണ on the end — the same tail that closes *adhyāpakan* and *karṣakan*, and it marks this one out as a he-word. The sun is a person in that grammar, not a thing.

The Sanskrit word has cousins a long way west. It shares an ancestor with Latin *sol* and with the Greek piece behind *helios*, which is why English *solar* and *heliotrope* are distant relatives of the word a Malayali newsreader says.

Malayalam's own sun-word is ഞായർ (*ñāyar*), and it survives mostly inside the name of Sunday, ഞായറാഴ്ച (*ñāyarālca*) — the sun's day, arrived at independently of the English one.

What you've built

Two: the sky, and the thing that crosses it.

Your turn

- *Say it: sūryan*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: ākāśam, then sūryan, and say which of the two is the container*
- *Recall: read ഉപകാരം*

Before you move on

What does സൂര്യൻ mean? (“the sun”.) Say it once more.

53.3 ചന്ദ്രൻ (candran) — the moon

Before the new one: what did *sūryan* mean?

You’ll want to know: ചന്ദ്രൻ

ചന്ദ്രൻ (*candran*) — “the moon”.

Sanskrit *candra* means “shining, bright”, and Malayalam took it whole, then gave it the same he-word tail the sun got. Sun and moon travel as a pair in this language, down to the shape of their endings.

candra went west too. It shares an ancestor with the Latin piece behind English *candle* and *incandescent*: a very old root for burning white.

Malayalam’s inherited moon-word is തിങ്കൾ (*tiṅkal*), and that word also names Monday and once named a month. One shape for the moon and for the stretch of time it measures — the moon being the oldest calendar there is, and Malayalam keeping that fact inside a single word.

What you’ve built

Three, and the last two were borrowed together.

Your turn

- *Say it: candran*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: sūryan, then candran, and hear the same tail on both*

- *Recall:* say *bahumānam*

Before you move on

What does ചന്ദ്രൻ mean? (“the moon”.) Say it once more.

53.4 നക്ഷത്രം (nakṣatram) — a star

Before the new one: what did *candran* mean?

You’ll want to know: നക്ഷത്രം

നക്ഷത്രം (*nakṣatram*) — “a star”.

Sanskrit *nakṣatra*. In Kerala it does a job it does not do in English: a person’s നക്ഷത്രം is the birth-star, one of twenty-seven asterisms the moon passes through, and it is the star you were born under rather than the date that fixes when your birthday falls.

So a Malayali may keep two birthdays a year apart from each other — the calendar one and the star one — and the star one is the one the household cooks for.

Tamil reaches for the same borrowed word, *naṭcattiram*, worn down a little further. The inherited Dravidian way of naming a star was to call it a fish in the sky, and Tamil still has *viṇmīn* for it; Malayalam let that one go.

What you’ve built

Four, and this one keeps a calendar.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *nakṣatram*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *nakṣatram*, then *candran*, and say which of the two moves through the other
- *Recall:* read അനുഗ്രഹം

Before you move on

What does നക്ഷത്രം mean? (“a star”.) Say it once more.

53.5 വെയിൽ (veyil) — sunshine, the sun’s heat

Before the new one: what did *nakṣatram* mean?

You’ll want to know: വെയിൽ

വെയിൽ (*veyil*) — “sunshine, the sun’s heat”.

After four borrowed words, an inherited one. വെയിൽ is Malayalam’s own, matching Tamil *veyil* exactly, and it names the heat that falls out of the sky rather than the body that sends it.

That is worth pausing on. English talks about the weather by naming the sun; Malayalam reaches first for what the sun does to you standing in it. A Kochi sentence about the afternoon is far more likely to be about വെയിൽ than about *sūryan* at all. Step out of the shade and you have stepped into വെയിൽ.

Beside it sits its opposite, തണൽ (*taṇal*), the shade — and between those two words most of a hot afternoon can be described without the sun being mentioned once.

What you’ve built

Five: the sky, the sun, the moon, a star, and what comes down out of it by day.

Your turn

- *Say it: veyil*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: all five in order — ākāśam, sūryan, candran, nakṣatram, veyil*
- *Recall: say vandanam*

Before you move on

What does **വെയിൽ** mean? (“sunshine, the sun’s heat”.) Say it once more.

Chapter 54

A Tree, Part by Part

Modes: 🗣️ voice (5) 🗣️ Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name a tree and four of its parts in Malayalam.

Complete ML-C54-seed and say all five words in order.

54.1 മരം (maram) — a tree

Before the new run of words: what did *nakṣatram* mean, and what did *veyil* mean?

You'll want to know: മരം

മരം (*maram*) — “a tree”.

Inherited Dravidian, matching Tamil *maram*, Kannada *marā* and Telugu *mṛānu*. Four languages, one word, and no borrowing anywhere in it — this is a word the family had before it split.

It carries the standing tree and the cut timber on one shape. A carpenter's മരം and a forest's മരം are the same word, and Malayalam leaves it to the situation to say which is meant. English needs *tree* and *wood* to do that work.

Kerala's own tree, the coconut, gets a compound built on this one, and the ordinary word for a tree-climber is built on it too.

What you've built

The thing the rest of this run takes apart.

Your turn

- *Say it: marami*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: veyil, then marami, and say which of the two the other one stands in*
- *Recall: say vātil*

Before you move on

What does മരം mean? (“a tree”.) Say it once more.

54.2 കൊമ്പ് (kompŭ) — a branch

Before the new one: what did *marami* mean?

You’ll want to know: കൊമ്പ്

കൊമ്പ് (*kompŭ*) — “a branch”.

Inherited, matching Tamil *kompu*. Malayalam puts one shape on anything that juts out and comes to a point: the branch of a tree, the horn of an ox, the tusk of an elephant, and the curved brass horn played at a temple festival.

That is a picture doing the work rather than a rule. Once you have seen the branch and the horn as one thing, the elephant’s tusk needs no separate word, and Malayalam never gave it one.

The elephant sense is the one you are most likely to hear in Kerala, where the animal is a fixture of festival and of conversation both.

What you’ve built

Two: the tree, and the part that reaches out from it.

Your turn

- *Say it: kompŭ*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*

- *Say it:* *marami*, then *kompŭ*, and name two other things the second word covers
- *Recall:* read കരൂര

Before you move on

What does കൊമ്പ് mean? (“a branch”.) Say it once more.

54.3 തടി (taṭi) — a trunk, timber

Before the new one: what did *kompŭ* mean?

You’ll want to know: തടി

തടി (*taṭi*) — “a trunk, timber”.

Inherited, and it does three jobs on one shape: the trunk of a standing tree, the sawn timber that comes out of it, and — of a person — bulk or build.

The third sense is ordinary Malayalam and not unkind. To say somebody has തടി is to say they are solidly made, and Kerala says it about a person the way English might say *sturdy*.

Beside it sits തടിയൻ (*taṭiyan*), a heavy-set man, carrying that same he-word tail you met on the sun and the moon.

What you’ve built

Three, and this one describes people as well as trees.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *taṭi*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *kompŭ*, then *taṭi*, and say which of the two you could saw
- *Recall:* say *kōlami*

Before you move on

What does തടി mean? (“a trunk, timber”.) Say it once more.

54.4 വേര് (vēṛ) — a root

Before the new one: what did *taṭi* mean?

You'll want to know: വേര്

വേര് (*vēṛ*) — “a root”.

Inherited, matching Tamil *vēr* closely. The little ̣ at the end is the enunciative vowel you have been hearing since the salt-word and the lamp-word: a half-sounded release that Malayalam puts after a bare consonant and Tamil mostly does not write.

വേര് reaches past the plant, as the English word does. The വേര് of a matter is where it started, and a question about the വേര് of a quarrel is a question about its cause.

The two languages arriving at the same figure from the same word is not a coincidence here — it is what roots look like to anybody who has pulled one up.

What you've built

Four: the tree, the branch, the trunk, and what holds it down.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *vēṛ*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *taṭi*, then *vēṛ*, and say which end of the tree each one names
- *Recall:* read പൂവ്

Before you move on

What does വേര് mean? (“a root”.) Say it once more.

54.5 വിത്ത് (vitt) — a seed

Before the new one: what did *vēṛ* mean?

You'll want to know: വിത്ത്

വിത്ത് (*vittũ*) — “a seed”.

Inherited, matching Tamil *vittu*, and it closes the tree by going back to where the tree started.

Like വേര് it travels into the abstract. The വിത്ത് of a plan is its beginning, and Malayalam will talk about sowing one. The doubled *tt* in the middle is worth catching by ear — Malayalam holds it long, and the length is what separates this word from others in its neighbourhood.

Sowing season in Kerala is set by the rains rather than by a date, which is why the farming words in this language lean on the weather more than on the calendar.

What you've built

Five, and the run closes where a tree starts: a tree, a branch, the trunk, a root, a seed.

Your turn

- *Say it: vittũ*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: all five in order — marami, kompũ, taṭi, vērũ, vittũ*
- *Recall: say māla*

Before you move on

What does വിത്ത് mean? (“a seed”.) Say it once more.

Chapter 55

Ground Underfoot

Modes: 🔄 voice (5) 🔄 Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name five features of the Kerala landscape in Malayalam.

Complete ML-C55-field and say all five words in order.

55.1 പുഴ (pula) — a river

Before the new run of words: what did *vērũ* mean, and what did *vittũ* mean?

You'll want to know: പുഴ

പുഴ (*pula*) — “a river”.

Inherited, and it carries ഴ — the sound Kannada and Telugu both lost, and the one this book has already pointed at as Malayalam’s signature.

Kerala has forty-four rivers running west off the hills, and their names end in this word: Bharatappuzha, Chaliyar-puzha, Periyar. Reading a Kerala map is largely a matter of hearing പുഴ at the end of things.

The borrowed നദി (*nadi*) is the formal one, and it is what a textbook prints. പുഴ is what somebody points at.

What you’ve built

The first of five things underfoot.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *pula*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *vittũ*, then *pula*, and hold the *൧* a moment longer than feels natural
- *Recall:* say *ākāśam*

Before you move on

What does പുഴ mean? (“a river”.) Say it once more.

55.2 പാറ (pāra) — a rock

Before the new one: what did *pula* mean?

You’ll want to know: പാറ

പാറ (*pāra*) — “a rock”.

Inherited, matching Tamil *pārai*. The hard റ in the middle is the trilled one, and it separates this word from its neighbours by that sound alone.

Kerala’s ground is laterite over granite, and പാറ names the bare grey shoulders of it that show through where the soil has washed off. Quarrying is a പാറ trade, and the word turns up on lorries and on hillsides both.

It goes figurative in the direction you would expect: somebody unmoved by argument has a heart of പാറ, which is the same picture English reaches for and reached for separately.

What you’ve built

Two: the water, and what it runs over.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *pāra*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *pula*, then *pāra*, and hear the soft sound against the hard one

- *Recall:* read സുര്യൻ

Before you move on

What does പാറ mean? (“a rock”.) Say it once more.

55.3 നാട് (nāṭṭ) — home country, the place you are from

Before the new one: what did *pāra* mean?

You’ll want to know: നാട്

നാട് (nāṭṭ) — “home country, the place you are from”.

Inherited, matching Tamil *nāṭu*, and it is one of the busiest words in the language. A നാട് is a country, a district, a home region, or simply where you are from — the scale floats, and the situation fixes it.

It sits inside place-names all over the south, and inside the everyday question a Malayali asks a stranger early in a conversation: which നാട് are you from. Answering with a village is as correct as answering with a country.

Its opposite is കാട് (*kāṭṭ*), the forest — settled ground against wild ground, one vowel apart, and the pair is old enough to be shared right across the family.

What you’ve built

Three, and this one is the question you get asked.

Your turn

- *Say it:* nāṭṭ
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* nāṭṭ, then kāṭṭ, and hear how little separates the tame from the wild
- *Recall:* say candran

Before you move on

What does നാട് mean? (“home country, the place you are from”.)
Say it once more.

55.4 വഴി (vali) — a way, a path

Before the new one: what did *nāṭṭ* mean?

You’ll want to know: വഴി

വഴി (*vali*) — “a way, a path”.

Inherited, matching Tamil *vali*, and another ഘ word — the second in this run, which tells you how deep that sound sits in the oldest layer of the language.

വഴി is a path you walk and also a means by which something happens. Malayalam uses it where English says *by way of* and *through*, so a letter can come by വഴി of a friend.

The road and the method being one word is not peculiar to Malayalam. English *way* does the same double duty, and so does the Latin piece behind *via*. Some pictures are simply obvious to everybody.

What you’ve built

Four: the river, the rock, the home place, and the way through it.

Your turn

- *Say it: vali*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: pula, then vali, and hold the ഘ in both*
- *Recall: read നക്ഷത്രം*

Before you move on

What does വഴി mean? (“a way, a path”.) Say it once more.

55.5 വയൽ (vayal) — a paddy field

Before the new one: what did *vali* mean?

You'll want to know: വയൽ

വയൽ (*vayal*) — “a paddy field”.

Inherited, matching Tamil *vayal*, and it names a particular kind of field: the flooded, bunded one where rice grows. Dry ground planted with something else takes a different word.

That specificity is the point. A language grown in a rice country puts its sharpest word on the wet field, and Kuttanad — the stretch of Kerala farmed below sea level — is വയൽ for miles in every direction.

The chillu ൽ closing it is the one you met on the door-word and the leg-word, a bare *l* with no vowel behind it.

What you've built

Five, and the ground is furnished: a river, a rock, the home place, a way, a paddy field.

Your turn

- *Say it: vayal*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: all five in order — pūla, pāra, nāṭṭu, vali, vayal*
- *Recall: say veyil*

Before you move on

What does വയൽ mean? (“a paddy field”.) Say it once more.

Chapter 56

Things About the House

Modes: 🗣️ voice (5) 🖱️ Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name five ordinary household things in Malayalam.

Complete ML-C56-box and say all five words in order.

56.1 പാ‍യ (pāya) — a mat

Before the new run of words: what did *vali* mean, and what did *vayal* mean?

You’ll want to know: പാ‍യ

പാ‍യ (*pāya*) — “a mat”.

Inherited, matching Tamil *pāy*, and it names the woven mat that a Kerala household spreads to sleep on and unrolls for a guest to sit on.

The material is usually screwpine leaf or reed, split and plaited, and the making of them is a village trade with its own vocabulary. A പാ‍യ rolls up and stands in a corner, which is why a house with few chairs can still seat twenty people.

The mat and the chair answer the same question by different means, and the older answer is the one still in daily use.

What you’ve built

The first of five things a Kerala house keeps.

Your turn

- *Say it: pāya*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: vāyal, then pāya, and say which of the two is woven*
- *Recall: say marami*

Before you move on

What does പായ mean? (“a mat”.) Say it once more.

56.2 കൊട്ട (koṭṭa) — a basket

Before the new one: what did *pāya* mean?

You’ll want to know: കൊട്ട

കൊട്ട (*koṭṭa*) — “a basket”.

Inherited, and plaited from bamboo or palm strip like the mat before it. A കൊട്ട is the wide open basket that carries fish up from a boat, rice out of a field, or a load of pepper to market.

Kerala sizes them by trade rather than by measure, so a fish കൊട്ട and a grain കൊട്ട are different objects under one word, and the market knows which is meant.

The doubled **S** in the middle is held, the way the doubled sound in the seed-word was. Malayalam does a great deal of work with the length of a consonant.

What you’ve built

Two, and both of them plaited.

Your turn

- *Say it: koṭṭa*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: pāya, then koṭṭa, and hold the doubled sound in the second*
- *Recall: read കൊമ്പ്*

Before you move on

What does കൊട്ട mean? (“a basket”.) Say it once more.

56.3 കത്തി (katti) — a knife

Before the new one: what did *koṭṭa* mean?

You’ll want to know: കത്തി

കത്തി (*katti*) — “a knife”.

Inherited, matching Tamil *katti*, and the doubled *tt* is held long here too — three words into this run and the pattern is doing its own teaching.

Kerala’s characteristic blade is not held in the hand at all. It is the വാക്കത്തി and the sickle-shaped cutter clamped to a board, worked by pulling the vegetable across a fixed edge while sitting on the floor. The word covers that as readily as it covers a table knife.

A word for a tool tends to outlast the tool’s shape, and this one has outlasted several.

What you’ve built

Three: something to sit on, something to carry with, something to cut with.

Your turn

- *Say it: katti*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: koṭṭa, then katti, and hear the same held sound in both*
- *Recall: say taṭi*

Before you move on

What does കത്തി mean? (“a knife”.) Say it once more.

56.4 പാത്രം (pātram) — a vessel, a container

Before the new one: what did *katti* mean?

You'll want to know: പാത്രം

പാത്രം (*pātram*) — “a vessel, a container”.

Sanskrit *pātra*, “a receptacle” — the first borrowed word in this run, and it arrived carrying a second sense that Malayalam kept.

A പാത്രം is a cooking vessel, a pot, a dish. It is also a character in a story or a part in a play: the person is a vessel that a role is poured into. Malayalam film writing uses the word constantly in that second sense, and a reader meets both without difficulty.

One shape holding the pot and the person is the kind of figure a language borrows whole rather than builds, and Malayalam took it as it stood.

What you've built

Four, and this one holds a story as well as a stew.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *pātram*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *pātram*, and then say which of its two senses a cook means
- *Recall:* read വേര്

Before you move on

What does പാത്രം mean? (“a vessel, a container”.) Say it once more.

56.5 പെട്ടി (*peṭṭi*) — a box

Before the new one: what did *pātram* mean?

You'll want to know: പെട്ടി

പെട്ടി (*peṭṭi*) — “a box”.

Matching Tamil *peṭṭi*, and it covers the whole family of closed containers: a box, a trunk, a case, a crate.

It is one of those words that quietly absorbs new objects. Malayalam has built the matchbox, the ballot box and the letter box on it since, each one a compound with പെട്ടി sitting on the end and an older word in front.

A word that keeps accepting new referents without changing shape is a sign of a healthy one, and പെട്ടി has been accepting them for a long time.

What you've built

Five, and the house is furnished: a mat, a basket, a knife, a vessel, a box.

Your turn

- *Say it: peṭṭi*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: all five in order — pāya, koṭṭa, katti, pātrami, peṭṭi*
- *Recall: say vittū*

Before you move on

What does പെട്ടി mean? (“a box”.) Say it once more.

Chapter 57

Five More of the Body

Modes: ⇄ voice (5) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name five more parts of the body in Malayalam.

Complete ML-C57-bone and say all five words in order.

57.1 കഴുത്ത് (kaluttŭ) — the neck

Before the new run of words: what did *pātram* mean, and what did *petti* mean?

You’ll want to know: കഴുത്ത്

കഴുത്ത് (*kaluttŭ*) — “the neck”.

Inherited, matching Tamil *kaluttu*, and carrying ഴ again — the third run of this book to lean on that sound, and by now your mouth should be finding it without being told.

It is the neck and the throat together, outside and in. A garland goes round the കഴുത്ത്, and so does the thin gold chain a Kerala woman is given at her wedding.

The held *tt* and the closing *ŭ* are both here as well, which makes this word a short review of three things at once.

What you’ve built

The first of five more, and it holds the garland.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *kaluttŭ*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *peṭṭi*, then *kaluttŭ*, and hold the *ṣ* in the middle
- *Recall:* say *pula*

Before you move on

What does കഴുത്ത് mean? (“the neck”.) Say it once more.

57.2 മുതുകു് (mutukŭ) — the back

Before the new one: what did *kaluttŭ* mean?

You’ll want to know: മുതുകു്

മുതുകു് (*mutukŭ*) — “the back”.

Inherited, matching Tamil *mutuku*, and it names the back of a body — the ridged stretch between the shoulders and the waist.

Malayalam separates that from the general idea of behindness, which it handles with a different word altogether. **മുതുകു്** stays on the body, so it is the word for the back that aches after a day bent over a വയൽ.

It shows up in the ordinary phrase for carrying a child astride the hip or the back, which is how most Kerala infants travel.

What you’ve built

Two: the neck, and what runs down from it.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *mutukŭ*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *kaluttŭ*, then *mutukŭ*, and place each one with a hand
- *Recall:* read പാറ

Before you move on

What does മുതുക mean? (“the back”.) Say it once more.

57.3 ചുണ്ട് (cuṇṭṭ) — a lip

Before the new one: what did *mutukū* mean?

You’ll want to know: ചുണ്ട്

ചുണ്ട് (cuṇṭṭ) — “a lip”.

Inherited, matching Tamil *cuṇṭu*. It is the lip of a mouth and also the beak of a bird — one shape for the pointed front edge of the face, whatever the face belongs to.

The same word reaches the spout of a jug, so a Malayalam pot has lips much as an English one does. That figure was arrived at twice over, on two sides of the world, from the same obvious resemblance.

The ണ cluster in the middle is the retroflex *ṇ* running straight into a *t*, made with the tongue curled back, and it is worth slowing down for.

What you’ve built

Three, and this one belongs to birds as well.

Your turn

- *Say it:* cuṇṭṭ
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* mutukū, then cuṇṭṭ, and curl the tongue back for the middle of the second
- *Recall:* say nāṭṭ

Before you move on

What does ചുണ്ട് mean? (“a lip”.) Say it once more.

57.4 നഖം (nakham) — a nail, a claw

Before the new one: what did *cunṭū* mean?

You'll want to know: നഖം

നഖം (*nakham*) — “a nail, a claw”.

Sanskrit *nakha* — and this one has relatives much further west. It shares an ancestor with Latin *unguis*, with Greek *onyx*, and with English *nail* itself, which reached the same meaning down an entirely separate line of descent.

A word for a fingernail surviving intact across that distance is worth noticing. Body-part words are among the slowest things in any language to be replaced, because everybody has one and everybody learns the word early.

നഖം covers the fingernail, the toenail and the claw of an animal alike.

What you've built

Four, and this one has cousins across half the world.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *nakham*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *nakham*, then the English word for it, and hear how far apart they have drifted
- *Recall:* read വഴി

Before you move on

What does നഖം mean? (“a nail, a claw”.) Say it once more.

57.5 എല്ല (ellū) — a bone

Before the new one: what did *nakham* mean?

You'll want to know: എല്ല

എല്ല (*ellŭ*) — “a bone”.

Inherited, and Tamil says *elumpu* for the same thing — close enough to hear the shared ancestor, far enough apart to show the two languages went on working after they separated.

Malayalam shortened where Tamil kept the extra piece, which is the direction these two usually run. Set the two side by side often enough and the pattern starts to predict itself.

The doubled *ll* is held, and the *ŭ* closes it, so the whole word is over in about the time it takes to say the English one.

What you've built

Five, and the frame is done: the neck, the back, a lip, a nail, a bone.

Your turn

- *Say it: ellŭ*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: all five in order — kaluttŭ, mutukŭ, cuṇṭŭ, nakhami, ellŭ*
- *Recall: say vayal*

Before you move on

What does എല്ല mean? (“a bone”.) Say it once more.

Chapter 58

Six More Short Answers

Modes: 🗣️ voice (6) 🖱️ Hands-free start: all 6 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can ask for something, accept, refuse, and ask for more or less in Malayalam.

Complete ML-C58-that-will-do and say all six words in order, beginning with the one that makes the offer.

58.1 കൂടുതൽ (kūṭtural) — more

Before the new run of words: what did *nakham* mean, and what did *ellū* mean?

You'll want to know: കൂടുതൽ

കൂടുതൽ (*kūṭtural*) — “more”.

Built on കൂടുക (*kūṭuka*), “to join, to gather, to increase”, with a tail Malayalam puts on a doing to turn it into a thing. The whole says, roughly, “an increasing”.

It answers the question at a Kerala meal, where a server comes round the leaf a second and a third time and the guest has to say something. കൂടുതൽ asks for more.

The long *ū* at the front carries the word. Shorten it and you have said something else entirely, so it is worth stretching.

What you've built

The first of five short answers.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *kūṭutal*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *ellŭ*, then *kūṭutal*, and stretch the long vowel at the front
- *Recall:* say *pāya*

Before you move on

What does കുടുതൽ mean? (“more”.) Say it once more.

58.2 കുറവ് (kuravŭ) — less, a shortage

Before the new one: what did *kūṭutal* mean?

You’ll want to know: കുറവ്

കുറവ് (*kuravŭ*) — “less, a shortage”.

The mirror of the last one, built the same way: കുറയുക (*kurayuka*), “to lessen, to fall short”, plus a tail that makes the doing into a thing.

കുറവ് is less of something, and it is also a shortfall or a lack. A house short of water has a water കുറവ്, and a piece of work with something missing has a കുറവ് in it.

The റ here is the hard trilled one you met in the rock-word, and the ŭ closes the word the way it closed the root-word and the seed-word.

What you’ve built

Two, and they are opposites built from the same parts.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *kuravŭ*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *kūṭutal*, then *kuravŭ*, and hear the two tails matching
- *Recall:* read കൊട്ട

Before you move on

What does കുറവ് mean? (“less, a shortage”.) Say it once more.

58.3 കുറച്ച് (kuraccŭ) — a little, a few

Before the new one: what did *kuravŭ* mean?

You’ll want to know: കുറച്ച്

കുറച്ച് (*kuraccŭ*) — “a little, a few”.

The same root as the word before it, turned a different way: from കുറ-, “to be little”, but landing on a quantity rather than on a lack.

The difference matters at a table. കുറവ് complains that there is not enough; കുറച്ച് politely asks for a small amount. One is a verdict and the other is a request, and they are one syllable apart.

Malayalam gets a great deal out of a single root by varying the tail on it, and this pair is a clean example — the same three sounds at the front, two different jobs at the back.

What you’ve built

Three, and the last two share a root.

Your turn

- *Say it: kuraccŭ*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: kuravŭ, then kuraccŭ, and say which of the two you would use asking for rice*
- *Recall: say katti*

Before you move on

What does കുറച്ച് mean? (“a little, a few”.) Say it once more.

58.4 വേണം (vēṇam) — “I want”

Three short answers are already yours — *more, less, a little*. Say them.

Every one of them answers an offer. **None of them makes one.**

You’ll want to know: വേണം

വേണം — vēṇam — it is wanted

This is the word the rest of the chapter is built against. The next lesson gives you its negative partner, and between them they make a whole exchange: one word offers, one accepts, one declines.

Grammar Lens: nobody wants anything in Malayalam

എനിക്ക് വെള്ളം വേണം.

enikkū vellam vēṇam — “**I want water.**”

Read it in Malayalam order and it does not say that. It says **to me — water — is wanted**. The water is what the sentence is about; **you are not the subject**, you are the one it is wanted *by*.

You have built a sentence like this before. **Knowing** arrived at you the same way, and so did **age**. This is that shape again, and it is worth expecting rather than relearning: when a Malayalam sentence is about something happening *to* a person, the person shows up in the dative and the thing takes the front.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *vēṇam* — wanted
- *enikkū vellam vēṇam*
- which word in the sentence is the subject, and which one is you

Before you move on

How do you say *I want water*? (എനിക്ക് വെള്ളം വേണം.) Who is the subject of that sentence? (**The water** — not you.) And which case is the person in? (**The dative** — *enikkũ*.)

58.5 വേണ്ട (vēṇṭa) — no need, no thank you

Before the new one: what did *kuraccũ* mean?

You'll want to know: വേണ്ട

വേണ്ട (*vēṇṭa*) — “no need, no thank you”.

The negative partner of വേണം (*vēṇam*), “it is wanted”. വേണ്ട says the opposite: not wanted, not needed, no.

This is the polite refusal at a Kerala meal, and it is said often, because the serving is persistent. Said gently it declines; said firmly it stops the ladle. A guest who has learned only one refusal in Malayalam should learn this one.

Note that it declines the offer rather than the person. Malayalam has warmer ways of saying no to a request, and this one keeps to food, drink and objects.

What you've built

Four, and this one gets you through a meal.

Your turn

- *Say it: vēṇṭa*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: vēṇṭa, gently, then vēṇṭa again, firmly, and hear the difference the tone makes*
- *Recall: read പാത്രം*

Before you move on

What does വേണ്ട mean? (“no need, no thank you”.) Say it once more.

58.6 പോരും (pōrumi) — that will do, that is enough

Before the new one: what did *vēṇṭa* mean?

You’ll want to know: പോരും

പോരും (*pōrumi*) — “that will do, that is enough”.

From പോരുക (*pōruka*), “to suffice”, and it means that what is there is already enough.

Set it against *mati*, which you already have. The two overlap, and either will stop a server; പോരും leans a little more towards “that reaches far enough” and *mati* towards “stop”. Kerala uses both, often in the same breath.

The ൾ at the end is the anusvara, the humming close you have met on the sky-word and the star-word and the vessel-word. It closes a great many Malayalam words, and by now it should be arriving without thought.

What you’ve built

Five, and you can answer a served plate five ways: more, less, a little, no need, that will do.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *pōrumi*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* all five in order — *kūṭutal*, *kuravū*, *kuraccū*, *vēṇṭa*, *pōrumi*
- *Recall:* say *peṭṭi*

Before you move on

What does പോരും mean? (“that will do, that is enough”.) Say it once more.

Chapter 59

What the Air Carries

Modes: ⇄ voice (5) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name wind, sand, mud, smoke and an ember in Malayalam.

Complete ML-C59-ember and say all five words in order.

59.1 കാറ്റ് (kārrŭ) — wind

Before the new run of words: what did *vēṇṭa* mean, and what did *pōrum* mean?

You'll want to know: കാറ്റ്

കാറ്റ് (*kārrŭ*) — “wind”.

Inherited, matching Tamil *kārru*. The doubled റ in the middle is one of the harder things Malayalam asks of a new mouth: a trilled *r* held long, closer to a *tt* made further back than to anything English has.

In Kerala the word is bound up with the monsoon, and the wind that brings it off the Arabian Sea has its own name in the local calendar. A fisherman's day is decided by കാറ്റ് before it is decided by anything else.

It also does the work English gives to *air*, so a room with no കാറ്റ് is a stuffy room rather than a still one.

What you've built

The first of five things the weather brings.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *kārrŭ*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *pōrumi*, then *kārrŭ*, and hold the doubled sound in the middle
- *Recall:* say *kaluttŭ*

Before you move on

What does കാറ്റ് mean? (“wind”). Say it once more.

59.2 മണൽ (maṇal) — sand

Before the new one: what did *kārrŭ* mean?

You’ll want to know: മണൽ

മണൽ (*maṇal*) — “sand”.

Inherited, matching Tamil *maṇal*. The ണ is retroflex, made with the tongue curled back, and the chillu റ് closes the word without a vowel after it — both of them sounds you have already been handling.

Kerala’s sand is a river business as much as a beach one. Sand is dredged from the beds of the rivers that this book has already given you a word for, and the trade is argued about constantly.

The retroflex *ṇ* is what separates this from a different word altogether, so the tongue position is carrying meaning rather than decorating it.

What you’ve built

Two: the wind, and something it moves.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *maṇal*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *kārrŭ*, then *maṇal*, and curl the tongue back for the middle of the second

- *Recall:* read മുതുക

Before you move on

What does മണൽ mean? (“sand”.) Say it once more.

59.3 ചെളി (ceḷi) — mud

Before the new one: what did *maṇal* mean?

You’ll want to know: ചെളി

ചെളി (ceḷi) — “mud”.

Inherited, and it names wet mud — the kind a monsoon makes, not the dry earth underneath it.

Kerala spends several months a year in it, and the word carries a mild disgust that the English one does not quite have. To say a thing has ചെളി on it is to say somebody should deal with that.

The **ള** at the end is the retroflex *ḷ*, tongue curled back again, and it is a different letter from the **ൽ** that closed the sand-word. Malayalam distinguishes three *l* sounds, and this run has now used two of them.

What you’ve built

Three, and the monsoon is doing the work.

Your turn

- *Say it:* ceḷi
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* maṇal, then ceḷi, and hear the two different l-sounds at the end
- *Recall:* say cunṭũ

Before you move on

What does ചെളി mean? (“mud”.) Say it once more.

59.4 പുക (puka) — smoke

Before the new one: what did *ceḷi* mean?

You'll want to know: പുക

പുക (*puka*) — “smoke”.

Inherited, matching Tamil *pukai*, and Malayalam has clipped the tail off where Tamil kept it — the same direction of travel you saw in the bone-word.

A Kerala kitchen fire makes a great deal of പുക, and the word covers steam and vapour as well, so a hot vessel and a smouldering one can be described with it alike.

It is a short word doing a wide job, which is common in this layer of the language: the oldest words tend to be the briefest and the busiest.

What you've built

Four, and this one rises.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *puka*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *ceḷi*, then *puka*, and say which of the two you would see from a distance
- *Recall:* read നഖം

Before you move on

What does പുക mean? (“smoke”.) Say it once more.

59.5 കനൽ (kanal) — an ember, a live coal

Before the new one: what did *puka* mean?

You'll want to know: കനൽ

കനൽ (*kanal*) — “an ember, a live coal”.

Inherited, matching Tamil *kanal*, and it names the live coal rather than the flame — what is left glowing when a Kerala kitchen fire has burned down, and what is banked at night to be woken in the morning.

That is a distinction the language keeps carefully. The flame is one thing, the smoke you have just had is another, and the കനൽ is the third: the part that holds the heat after the rest has gone.

The chillu ഞ closes it, the same bare *l* that closed the sand-word and the field-word before that.

What you've built

Five, and the run is closed: the wind, the sand, the mud, the smoke, and the ember that outlasts the fire.

Your turn

- *Say it: kanal*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: all five in order — kārṛŭ, maṇal, ceḷi, puka, kanal*
- *Recall: say ellŭ*

Before you move on

What does കനൽ mean? (“an ember, a live coal”.) Say it once more.

Chapter 60

Animals Around a House

Modes: 🔄 voice (5) 🔄 Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name a cow, a goat, a hen, a crow and an elephant in Malayalam.

Complete ML-C60-elephant and say all five words in order.

60.1 പശു (paśu) — a cow

Before the new run of words: what did *puka* mean, and what did *kanal* mean?

You'll want to know: പശു

പശു (*paśu*) — “a cow”.

Inherited from Sanskrit *paśu*, which named any tethered beast a household kept, and which Malayalam has narrowed to the one animal a Kerala yard is arranged around.

The Sanskrit word has relatives a long way west. Latin *pecu* meant a herd, and the English word *fee* began as the same idea — the wealth you could drive to market on its own legs.

The milk-word *pāl* comes out of a പശു, and so does most of what a Kerala kitchen does next with it.

What you've built

The first of five animals.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *paśu*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *paśu*, then *pāl*, and say which one gives the other
- *Recall:* say *kūṭutal*

Before you move on

What does പശു mean? (“a cow”.) Say it once more.

60.2 ആട് (*āṭṭ*) — a goat

Before the new one: what did *paśu* mean?

You’ll want to know: ആട്

ആട് (*āṭṭ*) — “a goat”.

Inherited, matching Tamil *āṭu*, and it covers the animal at any age or either sex — a second word goes in front when the difference matters.

It sits one letter away from *nāṭṭ*, the home-country word. Take the *n* off the front of that one and you have this one, so the ear has to catch the very start of the word rather than the end of it.

A goat is what a household keeps when it has no room for the larger animal: it eats what it finds and it climbs what it likes.

What you’ve built

Two.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *āṭṭ*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *nāṭṭ*, then *āṭṭ*, and say which of the two is an animal
- *Recall:* read കുറവ്

Before you move on

What does ആട് mean? (“a goat”.) Say it once more.

60.3 കോഴി (kōli) — a hen

Before the new one: what did *āṭṭ* mean?

You’ll want to know: കോഴി

കോഴി (*kōli*) — “a hen”.

Native Dravidian, matching Tamil *kōli*, and carrying the ഴ that Malayalam and Tamil kept where their sisters let it go — the same letter sitting inside *pula*, the river, and *vali*, the way.

One word does for hen and cock alike. Where a speaker needs to separate them, a second word goes in front.

It is also the clock of a Kerala house: a കോഴി wakes the yard well before anyone has thought about the hour.

What you’ve built

Three.

Your turn

- *Say it: kōli*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: kōli, then pula, and say which sound the two have in common*
- *Recall: say kuraccŭ*

Before you move on

What does കോഴി mean? (“a hen”.) Say it once more.

60.4 കാക്ക (kākka) — a crow

Before the new one: what did *kōli* mean?

You'll want to know: കാക്ക

കാക്ക (*kāḱka*) — “a crow”.

An imitation word: the bird is named for the noise it makes, and the same trick produced the crow-word in each of the sister languages. Once you have heard one you have the etymology.

Of all the birds around a house this is the one a household deals with daily. Cooked rice — *cōrũ* — set out on a step at the back is put there for the കാക്ക, and it arrives within the minute.

Kerala also gives the bird a job at a funeral rite, where a ball of rice is set out for the ancestors and the crow that takes it is the sign the offering landed.

What you've built

Four.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *kāḱka*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *kāḱka*, then *kōli*, and say which of the two is kept and which turns up
- *Recall:* read വേണ്ട

Before you move on

What does കാക്ക mean? (“a crow”.) Say it once more.

60.5 ആന (*āna*) — an elephant

Before the new one: what did *kāḱka* mean?

You'll want to know: ആന

ആന (*āna*) — “an elephant”.

Inherited, and a worn-down cousin of Tamil *yānai*: the same Dravidian word, with the front of it rubbed away over the centuries until two letters were left.

You met a piece of this animal before you met the animal. *Kompŭ*, the branch-word, already covered the tusk of an ആന — one picture for the branch, the horn and the tusk, and no separate word needed for the third.

In Kerala the ആന belongs to a festival before it belongs to a forest. A caparisoned elephant standing in front of a temple is what most Malayalis picture on hearing the word.

What you've built

Five, and the yard is full: the cow, the goat, the hen, the crow, and the one that walks in a festival.

Your turn

- *Say it:* āna
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* all five in order — paśu, āṭṭ, kōḷi, kākka, āna
- *Recall:* say pōrumi

Before you move on

What does ആന mean? (“an elephant”.) Say it once more.

Chapter 61

On the Kitchen Shelf

Modes: 🗣️ voice (5) 🗣️ Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name a coconut, oil, curd, jaggery and a chilli in Malayalam.

Complete ML-C61-chilli and say all five words in order.

61.1 തേങ്ങ (tēṅṅa) — a coconut

Before the new run of words: what did *kāḱka* mean, and what did *āna* mean?

You'll want to know: തേങ്ങ

തേങ്ങ (tēṅṅa) — “a coconut”.

Native Dravidian, and the fruit of the tree the tree-lesson pointed at without naming: *marami* is any tree, and Kerala's own one gets a compound built on that word.

One long-standing account derives the name Kerala itself from a word for the coconut palm. The account is debated and worth holding loosely, but nobody argues about the tree's place in the kitchen.

A തേങ്ങ is the ripe nut with the husk off. Almost everything on the shelf after this one comes out of it in some form.

What you've built

The first of five things off a Kerala kitchen shelf.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *tēñña*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *marami*, then *tēñña*, and say which one grows on the other
- *Recall:* say *kārṛũ*

Before you move on

What does കേരളം mean? (“a coconut”.) Say it once more.

61.2 എണ്ണ (eṇṇa) — oil

Before the new one: what did *tēñña* mean?

You’ll want to know: എണ്ണ

എണ്ണ (*eṇṇa*) — “oil”.

Native Dravidian, matching Tamil *eṇṇey*, and the older shape of it comes apart into two pieces meaning sesame and liquid — the oil named after the seed it first came from.

The seed changed and the word stayed. What a Kerala kitchen presses now is the coconut you have just met, so for most cooks the word for oil in general and the oil actually on the shelf name one thing.

The doubled ണ in the middle is a long consonant: hold it, the way *katti*, the knife-word, holds its *tt*.

What you’ve built

Two.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *eṇṇa*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *tēñña*, then *eṇṇa*, and say which one is pressed out of the other
- *Recall:* read മണൽ

Before you move on

What does എണ്ണ mean? (“oil”.) Say it once more.

61.3 തൈര് (tairǔ) — curd

Before the new one: what did *eṇṇa* mean?

You’ll want to know: തൈര്

തൈര് (*tairǔ*) — “curd”.

Native Dravidian, matching Tamil *tayir*. Milk is warmed, cooled to the hand, given a spoonful of yesterday’s തൈര് and left overnight; by morning it has set.

It closes on the same bare *r* that closes *vērǔ*, the root-word — a consonant with the vowel taken off it rather than a syllable of its own.

On a Kerala plate it is the last course, spooned over rice to cool everything the chilli did earlier.

What you’ve built

Three.

Your turn

- *Say it: tairǔ*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: pāl, then tairǔ, and say which one is made from the other*
- *Recall: say celi*

Before you move on

What does തൈര് mean? (“curd”.) Say it once more.

61.4 ശർക്കര (śarkkara) — jaggery

Before the new one: what did *tairǔ* mean?

You'll want to know: ശർക്കര

ശർക്കര (*śarkkara*) — “jaggery”.

Sanskrit *śarkārā*, whose first meaning was gravel or grit — the sweetener named for its grain rather than for its taste.

That word travelled further than most. Arabic took it as *sukkar*, Latin as *saccharum*, and English ended with *sugar* and *saccharine*, so an English speaker half owns this shelf-word already.

Kerala's own ശർക്കര is dark and soft, boiled down from palm sap or cane, and it is what sweetens the festival rice pudding rather than white sugar.

What you've built

Four.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *śarkkara*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *śarkkara*, then the English word *sugar*, and hear one word twice
- *Recall:* read പൂക

Before you move on

What does ശർക്കര mean? (“jaggery”.) Say it once more.

61.5 മുളക് (*muḷakṣ*) — a chilli

Before the new one: what did *śarkkara* mean?

You'll want to know: മുളക്

മുളക് (*muḷakṣ*) — “a chilli”.

Native Dravidian, and older than the thing it now names. The chilli reached Kerala on Portuguese ships in the sixteenth century; the word was waiting for it.

Before that it belonged to black pepper, the crop Kerala had been selling to the world for a thousand years. Pepper kept the word with a piece added in front of it, and the newcomer walked off with the plain form.

So the basket of pepper going down to the market and the മുളക് in the curry carry the same name, one of them with a syllable of warning attached.

What you've built

Five, and the shelf is stocked: a coconut, oil, curd, jaggery and a chilli.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *mulakŭ*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* all five in order — *tēñña*, *eṇṇa*, *tairŭ*, *śarkkara*, *mulakŭ*
- *Recall:* say *kanal*

Before you move on

What does മുളക് mean? (“a chilli”.) Say it once more.

Chapter 62

Made by Hand

Modes: ⇄ voice (5) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name rope, thread, a needle, a broom and a winnowing tray in Malayalam.

Complete ML-C62-winnowing-tray and say all five words in order.

62.1 കയർ (kayar) — coir rope

Before the new run of words: what did *śarkkara* mean, and what did *mulakŭ* mean?

You'll want to know: കയർ

കയർ (*kayar*) — “coir rope”.

Native Dravidian, from a root about twisting, and it names both the fibre and the rope twisted out of it.

The fibre comes off the husk of the coconut you met on the shelf, soaked in backwater until it softens and then beaten out by hand. Kerala has made rope this way for as long as anyone has written about it.

English borrowed the word along with the trade: *coir* is this word, carried out of Malabar on Portuguese and Dutch ships.

What you've built

The first of five things made by hand.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *kayar*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *tēṇṇa*, then *kayar*, and say which one the other is made from
- *Recall:* say *paśu*

Before you move on

What does കയർ mean? (“coir rope”.) Say it once more.

62.2 നൂല് (nūlŭ) — thread

Before the new one: what did *kayar* mean?

You’ll want to know: നൂല്

നൂല് (*nūlŭ*) — “thread”.

Native Dravidian, matching Tamil *nūl*, and it stands behind *tuṇi*, the cloth-word: one is what the other is woven from.

The older language put the same word to a second job. A treatise, a work of scholarship, was also a *nūl* — a thread of argument running from one end of a subject to the other, which is close to what English does with a train of thought.

It closes on the bare *l* of *cōṛŭ* and *vērŭ*: the consonant with its vowel shaved off.

What you’ve built

Two.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *nūlŭ*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *kayar*, then *nūlŭ*, and say which of the two is thicker
- *Recall:* read ആട്

Before you move on

What does നൂല് mean? (“thread”.) Say it once more.

62.3 സൂചി (sūci) — a needle

Before the new one: what did *nūlū* mean?

You’ll want to know: സൂചി

സൂചി (*sūci*) — “a needle”.

Sanskrit *sūcī*, from a root about piercing and pointing, and the same root gives Sanskrit its word for an indication or a sign.

So the needle and the pointer come from one idea: the thing that goes in, and the thing that points out. A Malayalam newsreader saying that a report *indicates* something is standing on this root.

With *nūlū* through the eye of it, a സൂചി is what turns cloth back into something a person can wear.

What you’ve built

Three.

Your turn

- *Say it: sūci*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: nūlū, then sūci, and say which one goes through the other*
- *Recall: say kōli*

Before you move on

What does സൂചി mean? (“a needle”.) Say it once more.

62.4 ചൂല് (cūlū) — a broom

Before the new one: what did *sūci* mean?

You'll want to know: ചൂല്

ചൂല് (*cūlŭ*) — “a broom”.

Native Dravidian, and a Kerala ചൂല് is a bundle of coconut-leaf ribs bound tight at one end — the coconut again, a third time on a third object.

Sweeping the yard at first light is the opening work of a Kerala day, done before the kitchen is lit, and it leaves the ground marked in long strokes that stay until somebody walks on them.

There is a second broom for indoors, softer, made of grass rather than leaf-rib, and the same word covers it.

What you've built

Four.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *cūlŭ*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *sūci*, then *cūlŭ*, and say which of the two you hold in a fist
- *Recall:* read കൂക്ക

Before you move on

What does ചൂല് mean? (“a broom”.) Say it once more.

62.5 മുറം (*muram*) — a winnowing tray

Before the new one: what did *cūlŭ* mean?

You'll want to know: മുറം

മുറം (*muram*) — “a winnowing tray”.

Native Dravidian: a flat plaited tray with a lip on three sides, woven from bamboo strip like the mat and the basket before it.

Its work needs the wind. Grain is tossed up off the മുറം and *kārrŭ* carries the husk sideways while the heavy part drops back — a machine with no moving parts, run on weather.

Ari, the raw rice on the kitchen shelf, has been through one of these on its way there.

What you've built

Five, and every one of them came off somebody's hands: rope, thread, a needle, a broom and a winnowing tray.

Your turn

- *Say it: muram*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: all five in order — kayar, nūlŭ, sūci, cūlŭ, muram*
- *Recall: say āna*

Before you move on

What does **ᄃᄆᄇ** mean? (“a winnowing tray”.) Say it once more.

Chapter 63

How the Body Reports

Modes: 🗣️ voice (5) 🖱️ Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name hunger, tiredness, pain, a cough and a fever in Malayalam.

Complete ML-C63-fever and say all five words in order.

63.1 വിശപ്പ് (viśappŭ) — hunger

Before the new run of words: what did *cūlŭ* mean, and what did *murani* mean?

You'll want to know: വിശപ്പ്

വിശപ്പ് (*viśappŭ*) — “hunger”.

Native Dravidian, built off *viśakkuka*, the word for going hungry — the state named from the process rather than the other way round.

Tamil reaches for a different root here, *paci*, so this is one of the places where the two closest sisters part company on an everyday word.

You already have the part of the body it reports from: *vayarŭ*, the stomach. One is the place, this is the message.

What you've built

The first of five things the body reports.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *viśappũ*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *vayaṛũ*, then *viśappũ*, and say which of the two is a feeling
- *Recall:* say *tēṇṇa*

Before you move on

What does വിശപ്പ് mean? (“hunger”.) Say it once more.

63.2 ക്ഷീണം (kṣīṇam) — tiredness

Before the new one: what did *viśappũ* mean?

You’ll want to know: ക്ഷീണം

ക്ഷീണം (*kṣīṇam*) — “tiredness”.

Sanskrit *kṣīṇa*, meaning worn away or diminished, from a root about wasting down to nothing.

In Malayalam the heavier sense has itself worn away, and the word has settled into ordinary speech for the plain tiredness of a long day.

It opens on the ക്ഷ pair that opens *kṣamikkāṇam*, the sorry-word — one letter riding on another, and the second one you have met wearing it.

What you’ve built

Two.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *kṣīṇam*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *kṣamikkāṇam*, then *kṣīṇam*, and hear the same opening twice
- *Recall:* read എണ്ണ

Before you move on

What does ക്ഷീണം mean? (“tiredness”.) Say it once more.

63.3 വേദന (vēdana) — pain

Before the new one: what did *kṣīṇam* mean?

You’ll want to know: വേദന

വേദന (*vēdana*) — “pain”.

Sanskrit *vedanā*, from the root *vid*, to know or to feel — pain named as the thing a body knows without being told.

That root has been busy in this book. *Vaidyan*, the doctor, and *vidyārthi*, the student, both grow from it: knowing, learning, healing and hurting all off one seed.

Malayalam keeps it for bodily pain first and lets the wider sense follow, so a speaker saying വേദന is usually pointing somewhere.

What you’ve built

Three.

Your turn

- *Say it: vēdana*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: vaidyan, then vēdana, and say which of the two is the reason for the other*
- *Recall: say tairũ*

Before you move on

What does വേദന mean? (“pain”.) Say it once more.

63.4 ചുമ (cuma) — a cough

Before the new one: what did *vēdana* mean?

You'll want to know: ചുമ

ചുമ (*cuma*) — “a cough”.

Native, and built the way the crow's name was built: the sound comes first and the word is shaped to match it.

Tamil went elsewhere for this one, to *irumal*, from a root of its own — a second parting between the two sisters inside one short chapter.

It covers the single cough and the standing complaint alike, so a speaker adds a word about how long it has gone on when that matters.

What you've built

Four.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *cuma*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *kākka*, then *cuma*, and say what the making of the two words has in common
- *Recall:* read ശർക്കര

Before you move on

What does ചുമ mean? (“a cough”.) Say it once more.

63.5 പനി (pani) — a fever

Before the new one: what did *cuma* mean?

You'll want to know: പനി

പനി (*pani*) — “a fever”.

Native Dravidian, matching Tamil *pani* — where the same word means cold, dew and frost.

Malayalam took the shivering and let the weather go. What the two senses share is a body that cannot get warm, which is the first hour of a fever and the whole of a cold morning.

Kerala hangs the word on the season: the weeks after the monsoon breaks are fever weeks, and പനി is the word on everybody's tongue.

What you've built

Five, and the body has said its piece: hunger, tiredness, pain, a cough and a fever.

Your turn

- *Say it: pani*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: all five in order — viśappŭ, kṣīṇam, vēdana, cuma, pani*
- *Recall: say mṭakŭ*

Before you move on

What does പനി mean? (“a fever”.) Say it once more.

Chapter 64

Five Words That Join

Modes:  voice (5)  Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say then, soon, sometimes, only and but in Malayalam.

Complete ML-C64-but and say all five words in order.

64.1 പിന്നെ (pinne) — then, after that

Before the new run of words: what did *cuma* mean, and what did *pani* mean?

You'll want to know: പിന്നെ

പിന്നെ (*pinne*) — “then, after that”.

Native Dravidian, built on *pin*, the piece meaning behind or at the back. What sits behind you in space becomes what comes after you in time, and the same short word does both jobs.

Kerala also leans on it as a filler, the *so...* a speaker puts in front of a sentence to buy a second before starting it.

After *śari*, it turns an agreement into a continuation: right, and then.

What you've built

The first of five small words that join one thing to the next.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *pinne*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *śari*, then *pinne*, as though agreeing and going on
- *Recall:* say *kayaṛ*

Before you move on

What does പിന്നെ mean? (“then, after that”.) Say it once more.

64.2 ഉടനെ (uṭane) — soon, right away

Before the new one: what did *pinne* mean?

You’ll want to know: ഉടനെ

ഉടനെ (*uṭane*) — “soon, right away”.

Native Dravidian, built on *uṭan*, meaning along with — what happens beside a thing rather than after it.

So the two words you now have divide the near future between them. *Pinne* leaves a gap; ഉടനെ closes it.

In Kerala speech it also softens a refusal: not now, but not far off either.

What you’ve built

Two.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *uṭane*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *pinne*, then *uṭane*, and say which of the two leaves a gap
- *Recall:* read നൂറ്

Before you move on

What does ഉടനെ mean? (“soon, right away”.) Say it once more.

64.3 ചിലപ്പോൾ (cilappōḷ) — sometimes

Before the new one: what did *uṭane* mean?

You’ll want to know: ചിലപ്പോൾ

ചിലപ്പോൾ (*cilappōḷ*) — “sometimes”.

Two pieces, and you can take them apart by ear: *cila*, some or a few, and *pōḷ*, the when-piece.

That tail is the same one closing *ippōḷ*, the now-word. One says at this time, the other says at some times, and the shared ending is the reason the two rhyme.

It is the word a Malayali reaches for when hedging: not a denial, only a fence around a claim.

What you’ve built

Three.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *cilappōḷ*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *ippōḷ*, then *cilappōḷ*, and say which of the two is certain
- *Recall:* say *sūci*

Before you move on

What does ചിലപ്പോൾ mean? (“sometimes”.) Say it once more.

64.4 മാത്രം (mātram) — only, that much and no more

Before the new one: what did *cilappōḷ* mean?

You’ll want to know: മാത്രം

മാത്രം (*mātram*) — “only, that much and no more”.

Sanskrit *mātra*, a measure, from the root *mā*, to measure. The Greek *metron* behind *metre* grows from the same seed, so this word and a poet’s line-length are cousins.

Set after a word it fences that word off: this much, and nothing beyond it.

Beside *kuraccū*, which says a small amount, മാത്രം says an exact amount and shuts the door.

What you’ve built

Four.

Your turn

- Say it: *mātram*
- Say it: it once more, slowly
- Say it: *kuraccū*, then *mātram*, and say which one sets a limit
- Recall: read ചുല്

Before you move on

What does മാത്രം mean? (“only, that much and no more”.) Say it once more.

64.5 എന്നാൽ (ennāl) — but, on the other hand

Before the new one: what did *mātram* mean?

You’ll want to know: എന്നാൽ

എന്നാൽ (*ennāl*) — “but, on the other hand”.

Built out of the saying-piece *enn-*, the one behind reported speech, and a tail meaning by or through: roughly, by that having been said.

English arrives at almost the same phrase from the other end with *that said*, which is a small comfort — the shape is already familiar even though the pieces are not.

So the word grants the previous sentence before it turns on it, which is a gentler move than a flat contradiction.

What you've built

Five, and a sentence can now go on, hurry, hedge, stop short or turn.

Your turn

- *Say it: ennāl*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: all five in order — pinne, uṭane, cilappōl, mātram, ennāl*
- *Recall: say muraṁ*

Before you move on

What does എനാൽ mean? (“but, on the other hand”.) Say it once more.

Chapter 65

Asking Well

Modes: 🗣️ voice (5) 🗣️ Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name a request, permission, consent, good manners and trust in Malayalam.

Complete ML-C65-trust and say all five words in order.

65.1 അപേക്ഷ (apēkṣa) — a request

Before the new run of words: what did *mātram* mean, and what did *ennāl* mean?

You'll want to know: അപേക്ഷ

അപേക്ഷ (apēkṣa) — “a request”.

Sanskrit *apekṣā*, made of a piece meaning toward and a root meaning to look. A request is a looking-toward: the eyes go to the person who can grant it before the words do.

It carries the ക്ഷ pair you have now met twice, in *kṣamikkanaṁ* and in *kṣīṇaṁ*, this time sitting in the middle of the word rather than at its head.

Beside *dayavāyī*, which softens whatever follows it, അപേക്ഷ names the asking itself and can stand on its own at the head of a written petition.

What you've built

The first of five words for asking well.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *apēkṣa*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *dayavāyi*, then *apēkṣa*, and say which of the two is the asking itself
- *Recall:* say *viśappū*

Before you move on

What does അപേക്ഷ mean? (“a request”.) Say it once more.

65.2 അനുവാദം (anuvādam) — permission

Before the new one: what did *apēkṣa* mean?

You’ll want to know: അനുവാദം

അനുവാദം (*anuvādam*) — “permission”.

Sanskrit *anuvāda*: a piece meaning after or along, and a piece meaning speaking. Permission is the speaking-after, the second voice that falls in behind the first.

The same Sanskrit word names a repetition and a translation, which is one picture seen from another side — saying again what somebody else has already said.

So the shape of the courtesy is built into the word: somebody asks, and somebody speaks after.

What you’ve built

Two.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *anuvādam*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *apēkṣa*, then *anuvādam*, and say which one comes first
- *Recall:* read ക്ഷീണം

Before you move on

What does അനുവാദം mean? (“permission”.) Say it once more.

65.3 സമ്മതം (sammataṁ) — consent, an agreeing

Before the new one: what did *anuvādaṁ* mean?

You’ll want to know: സമ്മതം

സമ്മതം (*sammataṁ*) — “consent, an agreeing”.

Sanskrit *sammata*: a piece meaning together, and *mata*, a thought held. Consent is two minds held in one position.

That *mata* piece stands behind the Sanskrit word for an opinion and for a doctrine, so what a household calls agreement and what a school of thought calls its position are the same word wearing different clothes.

Between the two you now have, *anuvādaṁ* comes down from somebody with the standing to grant it and സമ്മതം passes sideways between equals.

What you’ve built

Three.

Your turn

- *Say it: sammataṁ*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: anuvādaṁ, then sammataṁ, and say which of the two is given from above*
- *Recall: say vēdana*

Before you move on

What does സമ്മതം mean? (“consent, an agreeing”.) Say it once more.

65.4 മര്യാദ (maryāda) — good manners

Before the new one: what did *sammatani* mean?

You'll want to know: മര്യാദ

മര്യാദ (*maryāda*) — “good manners”.

Sanskrit *maryādā*, whose first sense was a boundary mark set at the edge of a field, and whose second is the bounds of proper conduct.

Kerala keeps both senses live in one word. To have മര്യാദ is to know where the edges are and to stop at them without being asked.

Beside *bahumānami*, respect, which is something a person shows another, this is something a person keeps for themselves.

What you've built

Four.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *maryāda*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *bahumānami*, then *maryāda*, and say which of the two you show and which you keep
- *Recall:* read ചുരു

Before you move on

What does മര്യാദ mean? (“good manners”.) Say it once more.

65.5 വിശ്വാസം (viśvāsaṁ) — trust

Before the new one: what did *maryāda* mean?

You'll want to know: വിശ്വാസം

വിശ്വാസം (*viśvāsaṁ*) — “trust”.

Sanskrit *viśvāsa*, from a root about breathing. Trust is drawn there as breathing out — a body that has stopped holding itself ready.

The same root sits behind the Sanskrit word for a sigh, which is the same picture again, and the metaphor survives whole into everyday Malayalam.

It also carries belief in the religious sense, so the everyday and the weightier senses share a word and the situation says which is meant.

What you've built

Five, and asking has its vocabulary: a request, permission, consent, good manners, and the trust the other four rest on.

Your turn

- *Say it: viśvāsam*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: all five in order — apēkṣa, anuvādam, sammatam, maryāda, viśvāsam*
- *Recall: say pani*

Before you move on

What does വിശ്വാസം mean? (“trust”.) Say it once more.

Chapter 66

Out in the Paddy

Modes: ⇄ voice (5) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name paddy, grass, an ear of grain, a plough and the harvest in Malayalam.

Complete ML-C66-harvest and say all five words in order.

66.1 നെല്ല് (nellŭ) — unhusked rice, rice still in the husk

Before the new run of words: what did *maryāda* mean, and what did *viśvāsam* mean?

You'll want to know: നെല്ല്

നെല്ല് (*nellŭ*) — “unhusked rice, rice still in the husk”.

Native Dravidian, matching Tamil *nel*, and it completes a set you have been collecting a piece at a time. നെല്ല് is the grain in the husk and in the field; *ari* is the same grain husked; *cōrŭ* is it cooked.

Three words for one plant is what a language does when the plant is the year's whole work. The flooded field you already know by name, *vayal*, is where the first of the three lives.

It sounds like *ellŭ*, the bone-word, with an *n* set in front. The two have nothing to do with one another, and the front of the word is again where the ear earns its keep.

What you've built

The first of five words from the paddy.

Your turn

- *Say it: nellŭ*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: ellŭ, then nellŭ, and say which of the two you can eat*
- *Recall: say pinne*

Before you move on

What does **നെല്ല** mean? (“unhusked rice, rice still in the husk”.)
Say it once more.

66.2 പുല്ല (pullŭ) — grass

Before the new one: what did *nellŭ* mean?

You'll want to know: പുല്ല

പുല്ല (*pullŭ*) — “grass”.

Native Dravidian, matching Tamil *pul*, and it ends the way **നെല്ല** ends — a doubled *l* with the vowel shaved off, so the two words rhyme on the tail.

They are the field's two crops seen from opposite sides. One is planted and counted; the other turns up on its own and is cut for the animals.

Which makes this the *paśu*'s word rather than the farmer's: grass is what the cow is walked out to.

What you've built

Two.

Your turn

- *Say it: pullŭ*

- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *paśu*, then *pullŭ*, and say which one eats the other
- *Recall:* read ഉടനെ

Before you move on

What does പുല്ലു mean? (“grass”.) Say it once more.

66.3 കതിര് (katirŭ) — an ear of ripe paddy

Before the new one: what did *pullŭ* mean?

You’ll want to know: കതിര്

കതിര് (katirŭ) — “an ear of ripe paddy”.

Native Dravidian, matching Tamil *katir*, and the same word names a ray of light. The ear of grain and the sunbeam are one shape to this language: a narrow bright thing thrown out from a stem.

Veyil, the sunshine-word, is the other half of that picture, and a Malayalam poet can put the two side by side and let the reader do the joining.

A field of കതിര് is a field ready. Everything in this chapter after this point is what happens next.

What you’ve built

Three.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *katirŭ*
- *Say it:* it once more, slowly
- *Say it:* *veyil*, then *katirŭ*, and say what the two have in common
- *Recall:* say *cilappōl*

Before you move on

What does കതിര് mean? (“an ear of ripe paddy”.) Say it once more.

66.4 കലപ്പ (kalappa) — a plough

Before the new one: what did *katirũ* mean?

You’ll want to know: കലപ്പ

കലപ്പ (*kalappa*) — “a plough”.

Native Dravidian, and it names the tool behind a word you already carry. *Karṣakan*, the farmer, was named for the furrow rather than for the crop; കലപ്പ is what cuts the furrow.

Kerala’s is a light wooden one, made for ground already under water, with a single iron-shod point and a beam for a pair of cattle.

Which puts the *paśu* back to work: the animal of the first chapter in this run and the tool of the last one are yoked together.

What you’ve built

Four.

Your turn

- *Say it: kalappa*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: karṣakan*, then *kalappa*, and say which one holds the other
- *Recall: read മാത്രം*, then say *sammatam*, then read മദ്യം

Before you move on

What does കലപ്പ mean? (“a plough”.) Say it once more.

66.5 കൊയ്ത്ത് (*koyttŭ*) — the harvest, the reaping

Before the new one: what did *kalappa* mean?

You'll want to know: കൊയ്ത്ത്

കൊയ്ത്ത് (*koyttŭ*) — “the harvest, the reaping”.

Native Dravidian, made from *koyyuka*, to cut or to reap — the harvest named for the cutting rather than for the gathering that follows it.

Kerala's largest festival is the harvest festival, and the flower pattern laid at the doorway for it, *pŭkkaḷani*, is the one the flower-lesson already named.

So the run closes where the year does: the grain, the grass, the ripe ear, the plough that opened the ground, and the cutting that ends it.

What you've built

Five, and the paddy year is whole: *nellŭ*, *pullŭ*, *katirŭ*, *kalappa*, *koyttŭ*.

Your turn

- *Say it: koyttŭ*
- *Say it: it once more, slowly*
- *Say it: all five in order — nellŭ, pullŭ, katirŭ, kalappa, koyttŭ*
- *Recall: say ennāl, then read അനുപക്ഷ, then say anuvādam*

Before you move on

What does കൊയ്ത്ത് mean? (“the harvest, the reaping”.) Say it once more.

Chapter 67

Which One in the Line

Modes: ⇐ voice (3) 👁 eyes (2) ⇐ Hands-free start: none of the 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say first to fifth in Malayalam, and make an ordinal from any number by taking off its final u and adding -aam.

The five said in order, every one of them built by the ending and not one of them memorized.

67.1 ഒന്നാം (onnāṁ) — first

A new kind of number word starts here, so the recalls come first, at the four growing distances this book measures.

- *Recall:* say *koyttŭ* — **R1**, one lesson back, before it decays
- *Recall:* say *nellŭ* — **R2**, the first real retrieval, five lessons back
- *Recall:* say *viśappŭ* — **R3**, durable, twenty lessons back
- *Recall:* say *kṛtajñata* — **R4**, recognition at distance, eighty lessons back

You'll want to know: ഒന്നാം

ഒന്നാം (onnāṁ) — “first”.

ഒന്ന്, രണ്ട്, മൂന്ന് answer **how many**. This word answers **which one in the line**, and Malayalam keeps a second set of words for that job.

It goes straight in front of what it counts, and nothing on the noun changes: ഒന്നാം വഴി (*onnāmi valī*), the first way; ഒന്നാം പുസ്തകം (*onnāmi pustakam*), the first book.

Grammar Lens: one ending, and no exceptions to it

Look at the word against the number it comes from:

cardinal

ordinal

ഒന്ന് (*onnŭ*)

ഒന്നാം (*onnāmi*)

The final **ŭ** goes, and ആം (*-āmi*) goes on. That is the rule, and Malayalam applies it to every number without a single exception — including this one.

Notice what that means about **where this chapter starts**. English has to teach *first*, *second*, *third* before any pattern begins. Latin has ten separate words. Even Malayalam's own sisters make *first* a special case. Malayalam does not, so this book can begin at **one** and simply count — and it begins there in order to say so.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *onnŭ*, then *onnāmi*
- *onnāmi valī* — the first way
- *onnŭ* is how many, *onnāmi* is which one

Before you move on

What does ഒന്നാം mean? (**First** — which one in the line.) What did you do to ഒന്ന് to get it? (Took the final **ŭ** off, added ആം.)

67.2 രണ്ടാം (*raṇṭām*) — second

- *Recall*: say *onnāmi*, and say what you did to *onnŭ* to build it — **R1**
- *Recall*: say *pullŭ* — **R2**
- *Recall*: say *kṣiṇāmi* — **R3**
- *Recall*: say *upakāram* — **R4**

You'll want to know: രണ്ടാം

രണ്ടാം (*raṇṭām*) — “second”. രണ്ട് loses its final *ṭ* and takes ആം, exactly as ഒന്ന് did.

cardinal	ordinal
ഒന്ന് (<i>onnŭ</i>)	ഒന്നാം (<i>onnāmi</i>)
രണ്ട് (<i>raṇṭŭ</i>)	രണ്ടാം (<i>raṇṭām</i>)

രണ്ടാം വാതിൽ (*raṇṭāmi vātil*), the second door.

Across the family: the word Malayalam did not use

Two ordinals is enough to see the machine, and enough to see what it saved Malayalam from. Its three closest relatives all have a *separate word* for **first**, and it is the same word in all three:

language	“one”	“first”
Malayalam	<i>onnŭ</i>	ഒന്നാം <i>onnāmi</i> , straight off <i>onnŭ</i>
Tamil	<i>onru</i>	முதல் <i>mudal</i> , “a beginning”
Kannada	<i>ondu</i>	ಮೊದಲನೆಯ <i>modalaneya</i> , on <i>modalu</i>
Telugu	<i>okaṭi</i>	మొదటి <i>modaṭi</i> , on <i>modalu</i>

Malayalam has that word too — മുതൽ (*mutal*) is the same Dravidian root — but it drifted, and in Malayalam it means “**from**”, the point a thing starts at rather than the thing that is first in line. So the slot that the sisters filled with a special word stayed empty here, and the ordinary ending filled it.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *raṇṭŭ*, then *raṇṭām*
- *onnāmi*, *raṇṭām*
- *raṇṭāmi vātil* — the second door

Before you move on

Say “the second door”. (രണ്ടാം വാതിൽ.) What do Tamil, Kannada and Telugu use for “first” that Malayalam does not? (A **separate word**, from one root meaning “a beginning”).

67.3 മുന്നാം (mūnnām) — third

- *Recall*: say *raṇṭām*, and say which word Malayalam did NOT use for “first” — **R1**
- *Recall*: say *katirū* — **R2**
- *Recall*: say *vēdana* — **R3**
- *Recall*: say *bahumānam* — **R4**

You’ll want to know: മുന്നാം

മുന്നാം (mūnnām) — “third”.

Three was the number the Dravidian family never quarrelled over: Tamil *mūnru*, Malayalam *mūnnū*, Kannada *mūru*, Telugu *mūḍu*, all keeping the long *ū* at the front. The ordinal keeps it too, because the ending only ever touches the end of the word.

cardinal	ordinal
മൂന്ന് (<i>mūnnū</i>)	മുന്നാം (<i>mūnnām</i>)
മുന്നാം കസേര (<i>mūnnām kasēra</i>), the third chair.	

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *mūnnū*, then *mūnnām* — hold the *ū* long both times
- *onnām*, *raṇṭām*, *mūnnām*
- *mūnnām kasēra* — the third chair

Before you move on

Say “the third chair”. (മുന്നാം കസേര.) Where on the word does the ending go? (**At the end** — nothing in front of it changes.)

67.4 നാലാം (nālām) — fourth

- Recall: say *mūnnām* — **R1**
- Recall: say *kalappa* — **R2**
- Recall: say *cuma* — **R3**
- Recall: say *anugraham* — **R4**

You'll want to know: നാലാം

നാലാം (nālām) — “fourth”.

cardinal	ordinal
നാല് (nālŭ)	നാലാം (nālām)

Written, the change is smaller than it sounds. നാല് ends in ല with the virama ൾ under it, the sign that says “no vowel here”. The ordinal replaces that sign with the ാ of ā and adds the ഃ: നാല് becomes നാലാം.

നാലാം പൂവ് (nālām pūvŭ), the fourth flower.

Your turn

- Say it: *nālŭ*, then *nālām*
- Look: at നാല് and നാലാം, and find where the virama was
- Say it: *onnām*, *raṇṭām*, *mūnnām*, *nālām*

Before you move on

Say “the fourth flower”. (നാലാം പൂവ്.) What sign does the ending replace on the page? (The virama ൾ.)

67.5 അഞ്ചാം (añcām) — fifth, and the five in a row

- Recall: say *nālām* — **R1**
- Recall: say *koyttŭ* — **R2**
- Recall: say *pani* — **R3**
- Recall: say *vandanam* — **R4**

You'll want to know: അഞ്ചാം

അഞ്ചാം (*añcām*) — “fifth”. അഞ്ച് drops its *ṣ*, takes ആം, and the set is complete.

What you've built

	cardinal	ordinal
1	ഒന്ന് <i>onnŭ</i>	ഒന്നാം <i>onnām</i>
2	രണ്ട് <i>raṇṭŭ</i>	രണ്ടാം <i>raṇṭām</i>
3	മൂന്ന് <i>mūnnŭ</i>	മൂന്നാം <i>mūnnām</i>
4	നാല് <i>nālŭ</i>	നാലാം <i>nālām</i>
5	അഞ്ച് <i>añcŭ</i>	അഞ്ചാം <i>añcām</i>

Count the work. **Five of five were built.** Not one of them was a word to learn: you already had the numbers, and the ending took one lesson.

That is worth stating plainly, because it is unusual. English makes you learn three before a pattern starts. Its own sisters each keep one special word for *first*. Malayalam keeps none, and this is the one place in the book where the right way to teach a set is simply to count.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *onnām, raṇṭām, mūnnām, nālām, añcām*
- the five cardinals, then the five ordinals, and hear where they differ
- *añcām vali* — the fifth way

Before you move on

Say first to fifth. How many of the five were words you had to learn? (**None** — all five were built by the ending.)

Chapter 68

All the Way Up, and First in Time

Modes: ⇄ voice (7) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 7 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say sixth to eleventh in Malayalam, and put an action first in time as well as a thing first in a line.

Order a thing in a line with onnaam and an action in time with aadyam, and say which question each one answers.

68.1 ആറാം (ārām) — sixth

The line goes on past five, so the chapter opens by retrieving where it stopped.

- Recall: say *añcāṁ* — **R1**
- Recall: say *onnāṁ*, and say what you did to *onnũ* to build it — **R2**
- Recall: say *pinne* — **R3**
- Recall: say *vātil* — **R4**

You’ll want to know: ആറാം

ആറാം (*ārām*) — “**sixth**”. ആറ് drops its *ũ* and takes ആം, with nothing else to notice.

ആറാം ദിവസം (*ārām divasam*), the sixth day.

That “nothing else to notice” is the point of the whole chapter. Six to ten were a separate lesson from one to five when you learned to count, because the words themselves had to be learned. For **ordering** they are not a separate anything.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- $\bar{a}r\check{u}$, then $\bar{a}r\bar{a}m$
- $a\check{n}c\bar{a}m$, $\bar{a}r\bar{a}m$
- $\bar{a}r\bar{a}m$ *divasam* — the sixth day

Before you move on

Say “the sixth day”. (ആറാം ദിവസം.) Did the ending change above five? (No.)

68.2 ഏഴാം ($\bar{e}l\bar{a}m$) — seventh

- *Recall*: say $\bar{a}r\bar{a}m$ — **R1**
- *Recall*: say $raṇṭ\bar{a}m$, and say which word Malayalam did NOT use for “first” — **R2**
- *Recall*: say $uṭane$ — **R3**
- *Recall*: say $kas\bar{e}ra$ — **R4**

You’ll want to know: ഏഴാം

ഏഴാം ($\bar{e}l\bar{a}m$) — “seventh”.

ഏഴ് carries the curled **l**, the sound in the name *Malayālam* itself and the one this language shares with Tamil while Kannada and Telugu hardened it away. Adding the ending does not soften it: ഏഴാം, with the tongue still curled back.

ഏഴാം ദിവസം ($\bar{e}l\bar{a}m$ *divasam*), the seventh day.

One honest warning about the page. This word begins with ഏ, the independent long $\bar{e}$, and that is a letter this book has taught you to *recognise* but not yet to *write* — no stroke order for it has been sourced, so none is offered. Read it; do not copy it yet. That is why this lesson is headed by its romanization rather than by the Malayalam word, the way the counting lessons were.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *ēlŭ*, then *ēlāmi* — keep the *l* curled both times
- *Say it:* *ārāmi*, *ēlāmi*
- *Look:* at **ஊழாம்** and find the **ழ**

Before you move on

Say “the seventh day”. (**ஊழாம்** **ദിവസം**.) What happens to the **ழ** when the ending goes on? (**Nothing**.)

68.3 എട്ടാം (eṭṭām) — eighth

- *Recall:* say *ēlāmi* — **R1**
- *Recall:* say *mūnnāmi* — **R2**
- *Recall:* say *cilappōl* — **R3**
- *Recall:* say *kōlami* — **R4**

You’ll want to know: എട്ടാം

എട്ടാം (*eṭṭām*) — “eighth”.

എട്ട has a doubled retroflex **ṭṭ**, written as **Ṣ** stacked under **Ṣ** with the virama between them. The ending lands after all of that, so the stack is untouched: **എട്ടാം**.

എട്ടാം **ദിവസം** (*eṭṭām divasam*), the eighth day.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *eṭṭŭ*, then *eṭṭāmi*
- *Say it:* *ēlāmi*, *eṭṭāmi*
- *Look:* at **എട്ടാം** and find the doubled **Ṣ** still in place

Before you move on

Say “the eighth day”. (**എട്ടാം** **ദിവസം**.) Did the doubled **Ṣ** change? (**No**.)

68.4 ഒമ്പതാം (ompathāṁ) — ninth

- Recall: say *eṭṭāṁ* — **R1**
- Recall: say *nālāṁ* — **R2**
- Recall: say *mātram* — **R3**
- Recall: say *pūvū* — **R4**

You’ll want to know: ഒമ്പതാം

ഒമ്പതാം (*ompathāṁ*) — “ninth”.

ഒമ്പത് was already a built word when you learned it: an old word for **one** plus *pathū*, **ten** — one short of ten, with the *n* turning to *m* before the *p*. The ordinal ending goes on top of that, and none of the machinery underneath reacts to it.

ഒമ്പതാം ദിവസം (*ompathāṁ divasaṁ*), the ninth day.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *ompathū*, then *ompathāṁ*
- *eṭṭāṁ*, *ompathāṁ*
- *on-pathū* slowly, then let it settle into *ompathāṁ*

Before you move on

Say “the ninth day”. (ഒമ്പതാം ദിവസം.) What two words are inside ഒമ്പത്? (An old **one**, and *pathū*, **ten**.)

68.5 പത്താം (pathāṁ) — tenth

- Recall: say *ompathāṁ* — **R1**
- Recall: say *añcāṁ* — **R2**
- Recall: say *ennāl* — **R3**
- Recall: say *māla* — **R4**

You'll want to know: പത്താം

പത്താം (*pathāṁ*) — “**tenth**”. പത്ത് loses its *ṭ* and takes ആം, and the ten are done.

പത്താം ദിവസം (*pathāṁ divasam*), the tenth day.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *pathṭ*, then *pathāṁ*
- *ompathāṁ*, *pathāṁ*
- all ten in order, from *onnāṁ*

Before you move on

Say “the tenth day”. (പത്താം ദിവസം.) Count the ordinals from one to ten. How many of the ten were words you had to learn? (None.)

68.6 പതിനൊന്നാം (*patinonnāṁ*) — eleventh, and the edge that is not there

- Recall: say *pathāṁ* — R1
- Recall: say *ārāṁ* — R2
- Recall: say *apēkṣa* — R3
- Recall: say *ākāśam* — R4

You'll want to know: പതിനൊന്നാം

പതിനൊന്നാം (*patinonnāṁ*) — “**eleventh**”.

പതിനൊന്ന് was itself a built word: *pathin-*, the joining shape of ten, with *onnṭ* welded on. Now the ordinal ending goes on top of *that*, and the result is a word of three parts, not one of which had to be learned as a whole.

പതിനൊന്നാം ദിവസം (*patinonnāṁ divasam*), the eleventh day.

Grammar Lens: the ending is a fact about numbers, not about ten

Most books stop an ordinal chapter at *tenth*, and a learner reasonably concludes that those ten words were the set. In Malayalam there is no set. ആം attaches to a **number**, so every number you learn from here on arrives with its ordinal already made: ഇരുപത് gives ഇരുപതാം (*irupathāṁ*), twentieth, without a lesson.

That is why this book taught the ending in the very first lesson of the previous chapter rather than after ten examples. The examples were never the content.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *patinonnũ*, then *patinonnāṁ*
- *pathāṁ*, *patinonnāṁ*
- take *irupatũ* and make its ordinal yourself

Before you move on

Say “the eleventh day”. (പതിനൊന്നാം ദിവസം.) Do you need a lesson for *twentieth*? (**No** — the ending goes on any number.)

68.7 ആദ്യം (*ādyam*) — at first, and the two kinds of order

- *Recall*: say *patinonnāṁ*, and say why *irupathāṁ* needs no lesson — **R1**
- *Recall*: say *ēlāṁ* — **R2**
- *Recall*: say *anuvādam* — **R3**
- *Recall*: say *sūryan* — **R4**

You’ll want to know: ആദ്യം

ആദ്യം (*ādyam*) — “at first”, “first of all”.

This is not another ordinal. ഒന്നാം picks an item out of a line: the first door, the first way. ആദ്യം puts an *action* first in time, and it pairs with പിന്നെ, which you already have:

ആദ്യം ഊണ്, പിന്നെ ചായ. — *Ādyam ūṇṣ, pinne cāya.*
“Lunch first, then tea.”

Why it’s said this way

Notice what did and did not get borrowed. Malayalam’s ordinals are native, and their ending is so regular that it never needed a special word for *first* — the one place its sisters all reached for മുതൽ. But for *first* as an adverb, the language reached into Sanskrit and took ആദ്യം, from *ādya*, “primary”.

So a language can have a perfect machine for one job and still borrow a word for the neighbouring one. It is worth carrying that as a habit of reading: a borrowing is evidence about a **slot**, not about the language as a whole.

What you’ve built

Two kinds of order, and the words for both:

what you are ordering	word
a thing in a line	ഒന്നാം <i>onnām</i> , and the ten after it
an action in time	ആദ്യം <i>ādyam</i> , with പിന്നെ <i>pinne</i>

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *ādyam*, then *ādyam ūṇṣ, pinne cāya*
- *onnām vali* — the first way
- both in one breath, and hear that they are answering different questions

Before you move on

Which one picks a thing out of a line, ഒന്നാം or ആദ്യം? (ഒന്നാം.)
 Which one puts an action first? (ആദ്യം.) Where did ആദ്യം come
 from? (**Sanskrit** *ādyā*.)

Chapter 69

Reading — Words, Lines, and a First Passage

Modes: 🗣️ voice (3) 🗣️ Hands-free start: all 3 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can read a Malayalam word cold, tell a naming line from a placing one by its last word, and hold a whole passage about one doorway without translating it word by word.

Twenty-four lines standing at one doorway, where ആണ് names and ഉണ്ട് places, and എന്നാൽ turns the page against itself.

69.1 (reading) — six words, and the mark that ends them

Every word below you have already met. Not one is new.

What is new is that nobody says them to you first.

Read this

ഇത് അത് ആണ് ഉണ്ട് പൂവ് പേര്

Read down the list once, without stopping.

Again — and this time look at how every one of them ends.

What to know first

All six end in the same small hook, the chandrakkala, and it is the most common mark on any Malayalam page.

It does two different jobs, and where it sits tells you which. Inside a word it stacks two consonants into a single shape — that is the mark you learned when you first wrote the greeting.

At the END of a word it does something else entirely: it is a faint half-u, breathed rather than said. പൂവ് does not stop at the v; there is a breath after it, and that breath is what the hook is for.

So a Malayalam word can end in a mark that is not silence, and a reader who treats it as silence will sound wrong on five words out of six.

Your turn

- *Say it:* the six words down the list, once, without stopping

Twice through:

Before you move on

How many of the six were new? (**None.**)

What does the chandrakkala do at the end of a word? (**A faint half-u** — not silence.)

69.2 (reading) — six lines, two verbs

The last lesson gave you words. These put them somewhere.

Six lines, three things, and no word you have not met.

Read this

ഇത് വാതിൽ ആണ്. ഇവിടെ വാതിൽ ഉണ്ട്. ഇത് പൂവ് ആണ്. ഇവിടെ പൂവ് ഇല്ല. അത് വിളക്ക് ആണ്. അവിടെ വിളക്ക് ഉണ്ട്.

Read the six once, straight down.

Now read only the last word of each line.

What to know first

English would translate ആണ് and ഉണ്ട് with the same word. It is, it is. Malayalam keeps them apart, and the difference is worth having.

ആണ് NAMES. It puts an equals sign between two things: this thing, that word. It says nothing at all about where either of them is.

ഉണ്ട് PLACES. It says a thing exists somewhere, and the somewhere is usually the first word on the line.

That is why the last word of the line is worth reading first. It tells you whether the line is about to name something or point at it, before you have read the middle.

And the pair that does NOT match: ഇല്ല is the negative of ഉണ്ട്, never of ആണ്. It is the one line here that takes a thing away.

Your turn

- *Say it:* the six lines aloud, once, straight down

Twice through:

Before you move on

Which verb names, and which places? (ആണ് names, ഉണ്ട് places.)
Which of the two does ഇല്ല cancel? (ഉണ്ട്.)

69.3 (reading) — the first passage

Six words, then six lines. Now twenty-four of them together.

Still not one new word.

Read this

ഇത് എന്റെ വാതിൽ ആണ്. ഇത് പഴയ വാതിൽ
ആണ്. ഇവിടെ കോലം ഉണ്ട്. ഇത് നല്ല കോലം ആണ്.
അവിടെ വലിയ മരം ഉണ്ട്. ഇവിടെ പൂവ് ഇല്ല. എന്നാൽ
ഇവിടെ മാല ഉണ്ട്. പിന്നെ ഇവിടെ വിളക്ക് ഉണ്ട്. ഇത്
പുതിയ വിളക്ക് ആണ്. അവിടെ ചെറിയ കസേര ഉണ്ട്.
കസേര പഴയ കസേര ആണ്. അവിടെ പുസ്തകം
ഉണ്ട്. ഇപ്പോൾ വെയിൽ ഉണ്ട്. ആകാശം നീല ആണ്.
ഇവിടെ വെള്ളം ഉണ്ട്. അവിടെ ചായ ഇല്ല. എന്നാൽ
ഇവിടെ പാൽ ഉണ്ട്. ഇവിടെ നായ ഉണ്ട്. അവിടെ പൂച്ച
ഉണ്ട്. നായ ഇവിടെ ഉണ്ട്, പൂച്ച അവിടെ ഉണ്ട്. ഇത്
പഴയ പുസ്തകം ആണ്. എന്നാൽ അത് നല്ല
പുസ്തകം ആണ്. ഇപ്പോൾ ഇവിടെ വലിയ മാല ഉണ്ട്.
ഇപ്പോൾ ഇവിടെ നോക്കൂ.

Read it once without stopping. Do not translate as you go — let the

lines arrive.

Now read it again, and watch ആണ് and ഉണ്ട് take turns.

What to know first

Everything near is ഇവിടെ; everything far is അവിടെ. ആണ് names; ഉണ്ട് places.

എന്നാൽ joins absence and presence: ഇവിടെ പൂവ് ഇല്ല. എന്നാൽ ഇവിടെ മാല ഉണ്ട്. It is the passage's one explicit connection.

Order carries the rest.

The first twenty-three lines describe. The last asks you to look.

Your turn

- *Say it:* the passage aloud, once, without stopping

Twice through:

Before you move on

Which word joins two thoughts? (എന്നാൽ — but.)

Which line speaks to the reader rather than describing? (The last one — ഇവിടെ നോക്കൂ.)

Chapter 70

Joining Things Together

Modes: ⇄ voice (4) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can put two or more nouns in one list, and offer somebody a choice between two, using the ending Malayalam puts on each item rather than a word between them.

From cold: water and rice, tea or coffee, and a three-item list carrying three endings.

70.1 വെള്ളവും അരിയും — where Malayalam puts its “and”

Say the word for water. Say the word for rice, the raw grain.

Now try to say the two of them together, as one list. **You have had both words since chapter fifteen and no way to put them side by side.**

What to know first

Malayalam’s “and” is not a word that stands between two things. It is a syllable that goes on the end of each of them.

വെള്ളവും അരിയും — *vellavuni ariyuni* — “water and rice”

The piece doing the work is -ഉം (-*umi*), and it appears **twice** — once on *water*, once on *rice*. English hangs one *and* in the gap between two nouns; Malayalam hangs one -ഉം off the back of every noun in the list and leaves the gap empty.

English	Malayalam
water and rice	water- um̐ rice- um̐

Count the joins, not the gaps. Two items means two -ഉം, and a list with only one of them on it is a list that is still waiting for something.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

The ending changes the word slightly as it lands, and the two changes here are the two you will meet most:

- വെള്ളം ends in -ം. That -ം becomes -വും: വെള്ളവും.
- അരി ends in ഇ. A യ് slides in to keep the two vowels apart: അരിയും. Which letter slides in depends on the vowel; after ഇ it is യ്.

Neither is a special case to memorise. Both are the same instinct a mouth has when one sound runs into another, and Malayalam writes down what the mouth already does.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- വെള്ളവും അരിയും
- how many times the joining piece appears in that list
- what sits in the gap between the two words (nothing)
- which of the two words changed its last letter, and to what

Before you move on

Where does Malayalam put its “and” — between the items or on them? (On them.) How many -ഉം does a two-item list carry? (Two.) What is in the space between the two words? (Nothing at all.)

70.2 വെള്ളവും അരിയും പാലും — every item, however many there are

Say *water and rice*. Count the joining endings in it.

Now say the word for milk on its own.

What to know first

വെള്ളവും അരിയും പാലും — *vellavum ariyum pālum* — “water, rice and milk”

Three items, three endings. English changes shape as a list grows — it drops commas in and saves its single *and* for the last pair. Malayalam changes nothing: every item carries the ending, and a list of five would carry five.

English	Malayalam
water, rice and milk	water- um̐ rice- um̐ milk- um̐

That is a rule you can extend without being taught the extension, which is worth noticing because English lists are one of the fiddlier things a learner of English has to absorb.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

പാൽ gives the third landing, and it completes the set you need:

- a noun ending in -ം → -വും: വെള്ളം, വെള്ളവും
- a noun ending in a **full vowel** → a letter slides in, chosen by that vowel; after ഇ it is യ്: അരി, അരിയും
- a noun ending in ൾ → the letter unfurls to ല and takes the ending plainly: പാൽ, പാലും

That last one looks like a change and is not. ൾ is ല with its vowel stripped away, and a letter in that state has no vowel to give. -ഉം brings one, so the full ല comes back to carry it.

It is the vowel that decides, not the position. You have had നിങ്ങൾക്ക് since the age question, and its ൾ sits in the middle of the word and stays a ൾ — because ക്ക് brings no vowel onto it.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- വെള്ളവും അരിയും പാലും

- how many endings a list of five items would carry
- what English does to a list that Malayalam does not
- why പാൽ ends up as പാലും rather than പാൽക്കും, and why നിങ്ങൾക്ക് does not do the same thing

Before you move on

Does the ending go on every item or only the last? (Every one.) What happens to ൾ when a **vowel** follows it? (It unfurls back to ല.) And when a consonant does, as in നിങ്ങൾക്ക്? (**It stays a chillu.**) How many endings in a four-item list? (Four.)

70.3 ചായയോ കാപ്പിയോ — the same trick, a different answer

Say the word for tea. Say the word for coffee.

Now try to offer somebody the pair of them — not both, one or the other.

What to know first

ചായയോ കാപ്പിയോ? — *cāyayō kāppiyō?* — “tea or coffee?”

-ഓ (-ō) is the ending for a choice, and it works exactly the way the joining ending does: **one on each item, nothing in the gap.**

ending	what a list of two means
-ഉം ... -ഉം	both of them
-ഓ ... -ഓ	one of them

The construction is identical and only the vowel changes. Having learned where Malayalam puts a joining ending, you already know where it puts a choosing one — which is the reason these two belong in one chapter rather than fifty pages apart.

The യ് glide appears again on both words here, for the same reason it appeared on അരി: both end in a vowel, and two vowels meeting want something between them. ചായ ends in അ and കാപ്പി in ഇ, and both of those vowels call for യ് — which is not to say every vowel does.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

There is also a separate word, അല്ലെങ്കിൽ (*allenkil*), which stands between two options the way English *or* does:

ചായ അല്ലെങ്കിൽ കാപ്പി

Both are heard. The ending is the shorter and more usual thing in a spoken question; the standing word is easier to reach for while the ending is still new, and it is the one that will look familiar on a page because it sits where an English reader expects *or* to sit.

Reach for whichever arrives first. A learner who says the long one has said the thing; the ending will come with hearing it.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- ചായയോ കാപ്പിയോ
- the same offer using the standing word instead
- what ചായയും കാപ്പിയും would mean instead
- which single letter is the whole difference between the two

Before you move on

Which ending offers a choice? (-ഓ.) Which one means you get both? (-ഉം.) Where do they go — between the items or on them? (On them, one each.)

70.4 ചേർക്കുക — two endings, from cold

Close the three lessons before this one. Say the word for water and the word for tea, with nothing in front of you.

What to know first

you want	you say
both	വെള്ളവും അരിയും
one of them	ചായയോ കാപ്പിയോ

One habit covers both: the ending goes on every item and the gap stays empty. Change the vowel and you change the question from *both* to *which*.

That is the whole of this chapter, and it is worth saying how late it arrives. **Sixty-nine chapters of this book gave you words and no way to put two of them side by side** — five body parts, five animals, five kitchen words, and until now no way to ask for two of them at once.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

The ending lands three ways, and all three are the mouth rather than a rule:

- **-ം** becomes **-വും** — വെള്ളം, വെള്ളവും
- **ഇ** and **അ** take a **യ്** first — അരി, അരിയും · ചായ, ചായയോ
- **ൽ** unfurls to **ല** — പാൽ, പാലും

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- water and rice, from memory
- tea or coffee, from memory
- water, rice and milk — three items, three endings
- which vowel turns a list into a choice

Before you move on

Where does a joining ending go? (On every item.) What sits between the items? (Nothing.) Which ending asks somebody to pick one? (**-ഒന്ന്**.)

Chapter 71

The People in the Sentence

Modes: 🗣️ voice (3) 👁️ eyes (1) 🖐️ Hands-free start: none of the 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can talk about somebody who is not in the room, at either level of respect, and I can say we in the two ways Malayalam requires.

From cold: the five third-person and we-words, the front letter that points away, and the question each choice answers.

71.1 അവൻ / അവൾ — the same front letter, on a person

Say the word for *this one* and the word for *that one*. Say which front letter means near and which means far.

Now point at a person and say *he*. **You have had the system since chapter forty-one and no word to use it on.**

You'll want to know: അവൻ and അവൾ

അവൻ — *avan* — he അവൾ — *aval* — she

Both open with the same അ- that makes അത് mean *that one*. The pointing system was never only about things; it has a column for people, and this is it.

	a thing	a person
near	ഇത്	—
far	അത്	അവൻ / അവൾ

The ending is what splits them: -ൻ for a man, -ൾ for a woman. Those two endings turn up again on other words, and meeting them here is the cheapest place to learn them.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

These are the **familiar** words, the ones for somebody younger, a close friend, a child — the people you would address with നീ rather than നിങ്ങൾ.

Tamil does the same thing with the same sounds, *avan* and *aval*, which is worth noticing because the two languages have been agreeing on the small grammatical words far more often than on the everyday nouns. A step up in respect needs a different word, and it arrives in the next lesson.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- അവൻ, അവൾ
- which ending marks a woman
- the front letter all three of അവൻ, അവൾ and അത് share
- which of നീ and നിങ്ങൾ these two words keep company with

Before you move on

Which word is *she*? (അവൾ.) What does the അ- at the front do? (Points away.) Are these the familiar words or the respectful ones? (Familiar.)

71.2 അവൾ — one word for *they* and for a person you respect

Say the two words for *you*, and say what makes the second one polite.

That same move is about to happen in the third person.

You'll want to know: അവർ

അവർ — *avar* — **they**, and about one person, **he** or **she** respectfully

The -ർ on the end is a plural, and Malayalam raises the register by making one person grammatically several — the exact move that turned നീ into നിങ്ങൾ back in chapter two.

familiar	respectful
നീ	നിങ്ങൾ
അവൻ / അവൾ	അവർ

Learning it once buys it twice. A habit met in the second chapter of the book turns out to be a rule of the language rather than a fact about one word.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

അവർ hides the person's sex, where അവൻ and അവൾ declare it. That makes it the safer word when you are unsure of the relationship: being a shade too polite passes without comment, and the other direction does not.

Context decides between *they* and *respectful he or she*, and usually decides it without effort — a room with three people in it needs no help.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- അവർ
- the two things it can mean
- the pair of *you*-words that work the same way
- which of the three third-person words hides the person's sex

Before you move on

What are the two readings of അവർ? (*They*, and a respectful *he* or *she*.) What does Malayalam use to raise the register? (A plural.) Which word would you pick if unsure? (അവർ.)

71.3 ഞങ്ങൾ / നാം — two words for “we”, and you have to choose

Say the word for *I*.

Now say *we*. Malayalam asks you a question first, and English never has.

You’ll want to know: ഞങ്ങൾ and നാം

ഞങ്ങൾ — *ñannal* — **we**, not counting the person you are talking to
നാം — *nām* — **we**, counting them in

English has one *we* and hides which it means. Malayalam has two and makes you pick every time.

you mean	you say
me and them, but not you	ഞങ്ങൾ
you and me	നാം

“**We went yesterday**” said to somebody who stayed behind is ഞങ്ങൾ. “**Shall we go?**” said to a friend is നാം — the invitation is the whole point of it, and using ഞങ്ങൾ there would shut them out of the sentence.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

ഞങ്ങൾ is built on ഞാൻ — the *I* you have had since chapter three — with the -ങ്ങൾ plural on it. It stays inside the speaker’s own group, which is the shape of the word matching the shape of the meaning. നാം is a different root and takes nobody’s ending. The shorter word is the one that gathers everybody in, which is a useful thing to hold on to. Tamil draws the same line with *nāṅgaḷ* against *nām*, and the two languages land on nearly the same pair of sounds — so a reader who has met one has most of the other.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- ഞങ്ങൾ, നാം
- which one invites a friend along

- which one you would use about a trip your listener missed
- which of the two is built on the word for *I*

Before you move on

Which *we* includes the listener? (നാം.) Which leaves them out? (ഞങ്ങൾ.) What do you ask yourself before choosing? (Whether the person listening is inside the *we*.)

71.4 (the people) — five words, from cold

Close the three lessons before this one. Say the word for *I*, and the word for *that one*, with nothing in front of you.

What to know first

	familiar	respectful
he / she	അവൻ / അവൾ	അവർ
	leaves you out	takes you in
we	ഞങ്ങൾ	നാം

Before this chapter a reader could say *I* and *you* and could not say *he*, *she*, *they* or *we*. Seventy chapters of vocabulary with nobody in them but the two people in the room.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

Two of the three groups run on machinery met long ago:

- അ- at the front points away — the same letter that makes അത് mean *that one*, now doing the work on a person.
- a plural raises the register — the move that turned നീ into നിങ്ങൾ in chapter two, turning അവൻ into അവർ here.

Only the two we-words are genuinely new, and the question they ask has no English equivalent to lean on.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- the five words this chapter taught, from memory
- which one hides whether the person is a man or a woman
- which *we* you would use to propose something to a friend
- the front letter three of the five share, and what it does

Before you move on

Which word is respectful and sex-neutral? (അവർ.) Which *we* leaves the listener out? (ഞങ്ങൾ.) What raises the register in Malayalam? (A plural.)

Chapter 72

The Thing Said

Modes: ⇄ voice (3) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 3 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can report what somebody said, thought, knew or asked, by putting the quotative ennu after a sentence I can already say.

From cold: the marker that turns any sentence into the thing said, and the four verbs it can hand that sentence to — with nothing inside the quoted sentence rebuilt.

72.1 എന്ന് (ennu) — the word that makes a sentence quotable

Say *enikkū malayāḷam ariyāṁ* — “I know Malayalam.” A whole sentence, and yours since the knowing chapter.

Now say *ñān parayunnu*. Today one word joins those two.

What to know first

എന്ന് — *ennu* — marks the sentence before it as the thing said

“എനിക്ക് മലയാളം അറിയാം” എന്ന് ഞാൻ പറയുന്നു.

“enikkū malayāḷam ariyāṁ” ennu ñān parayunnu — ‘I say, “I know Malayalam.”’

Nothing in the quoted sentence changed. It is the same five syllables you have been saying since chapter nine, sitting in front of *ennū* exactly as they stand on their own.

That is the whole of it, and it is worth more than the one word costs. English rebuilds a reported sentence — *I know Malayalam* becomes *that I know Malayalam*, and a different person or tense forces more changes still. **Malayalam leaves the sentence alone and puts a marker after it.**

Grammar Lens: where it sits

the sentence said	എനിക്ക് മലയാളം അറിയാം
the marker	എന്ന്
who says it	ഞാൻ പറയുന്നു

Read the three rows in that order and you have the sentence. **The quoted part comes first and the saying comes last**, which is the opposite of English and the same order Malayalam uses everywhere else — the verb at the end.

You have seen this shape before without the marker: *എന്നാൽ* (*ennāl*), the word for *but*, begins with the same *എന്ന*. They are relatives, and meeting one helps you notice the other on a page.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *enikkū malayāḷaṇi ariyāṇi*
- the same thing again with *ennū nān parayunnu* after it
- which of the two parts came out unchanged
- where the saying-verb sits, and where English would put it

Before you move on

What does *എന്ന്* do? (**Marks the sentence in front of it as the thing said.**) What has to change inside that sentence? (**Nothing.**) Which comes first, the saying or the thing said? (**The thing said** — the verb goes last.)

72.2 എന്ന് ചിന്തിക്കുന്നു — the marker does not care which verb follows

Say your quoted sentence with *ennŭ ñān parayunnu* after it.

Now swap the last verb for a different one. That is today's whole lesson.

Grammar Lens: one marker, four verbs

എന്ന് marks the thing said. What happens to it afterwards is up to the verb at the end, and you already have four of them:

the verb after it	what the sentence becomes
പറയുന്നു <i>parayunnu</i>	I say it
ചിന്തിക്കുന്നു <i>cintikkunnu</i>	I think it
അറിയാം <i>ariyāṁ</i>	I know it
ചോദിക്കുന്നു <i>cōdikkunnu</i>	I ask it

“എനിക്ക് മലയാളം അറിയാം” എന്ന് ഞാൻ ചിന്തിക്കുന്നു.

“*enikkŭ malayāḷaṁ ariyāṁ*” *ennŭ ñān cintikkunnu* — ‘I think I know Malayalam.’

This is why the marker is worth a chapter. It is one word, and it turns every sentence you can already build into something you can report, wonder about, claim to know, or put as a question — without learning a new shape for any of them.

The knowing verb keeps its own shape: അറിയാം puts what is known at the front and leaves the knower in the dative, so the sentence arrives at you rather than being done by you. The marker sits in front of it unchanged.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- the quoted sentence, then *ennŭ ñān parayunnu*
- the same, then *ennŭ ñān cintikkunnu*

- which part of the sentence you changed each time, and which part you did not
- the four verbs the marker can hand a sentence to

Before you move on

Does എന്ന് change when the verb after it changes? (**No.**) Name two verbs it can hand a sentence to. (*Parayunnu, cintikkunnu* — also *ariyāni* and *cōdikkunnu*.) And how much of the quoted sentence has to be rebuilt? (**None of it.**)

72.3 (the thing said) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say *I say* in Malayalam, and say which three places in this book used that verb before anybody taught it.

Grammar Lens: three pieces, in this order

a sentence you can already say	എനിക്ക് മലയാളം അറിയാം
the marker	എന്ന്
what happens to it	ഞാൻ പറയുന്നു / ചിന്തിക്കുന്നു

The middle row never changes and the top row never changes. Only the bottom one does, and it picks between verbs you have had since the thirties.
That is the payoff worth holding on to: **every sentence in this book is now something you can report.** The chapter added one marker and one verb, and what it bought was the whole of what you already knew, usable a second way.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- the three rows in order, as one sentence
- it again with the thinking verb at the end

- what English would have to change that Malayalam leaves alone
- the four verbs that can stand in the bottom row

Before you move on

What is the marker? (എന്നു.) What does it do to the sentence in front of it? (**Nothing** — it marks it as the thing said and leaves it whole.) Where does the saying-verb go? (**Last.**) And what is *to say*? (***Parayuka.***)

Chapter 73

Why, and Because

Modes: 🗣️ voice (1) 👁️ eyes (3) 🖱️ Hands-free start: none of the 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can ask why something is so, and give a reason in speech or in writing.

From cold: the question word and the two ways to answer it, which of them belongs in speech, and the word from chapter two that the question is built on.

73.1 എന്തുകൊണ്ട് (entukonṭṭ) — “by what”, which is how Malayalam asks why

Say the word for *what*. You have had it since the second chapter, inside the question you ask for somebody’s name.

Today it grows an ending, and becomes a different question.

What to know first

എന്തുകൊണ്ട് — entukonṭṭ — why

Look at the front of it. എന്ത് is sitting there, the word you already have. What follows is കൊണ്ട് (konṭṭ), an ending that means *by means of* — so the whole question asks, quite literally, “**by what?**”

That is worth noticing rather than memorising. **Malayalam did not invent a new word for *why*; it took the word for *what* and asked what caused the thing.**

Your question words now cover four of the five things a person asks about:

എന്ത് <i>entŭ</i>	what
ആര് <i>ārŭ</i>	who
എവിടെ <i>eviṭe</i>	where
എന്തുകൊണ്ട് <i>entukonṭŭ</i>	why

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

എന്തു is *entŭ* with its final mark opened out, which is what this script does when something follows. കൊണ്ട് is the piece carrying the meaning of *with* or *by*.

Three of the four question words in that table open on എ — *entŭ*, *eviṭe* and now *entukonṭŭ*. That is the letter the pointing chapter named as the one that asks: change a word's front from ഇ to അ to എ and it walks from *near* to *far* to *a question*. Today's word keeps the എ because it is built on a word that had it already.

ആര് is the odd one out and starts on ആ. Question words are a family, not a rule — most of them carry the asking letter, and *who* does not.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *entŭ* ... *entukonṭŭ*
- the four question words in the table
- which part of today's word you already had, and which part is new
- what the new part means on its own

Before you move on

What is *why*? (***Entukonṭŭ***.) Which word is hiding at the front of it? (എന്ത് — *what*.) And what does the ending add? (**By means of** — so the question is “by what?”)

73.2 കാരണം (kāraṇam) — a reason, and the answer to the question

Ask *why* in Malayalam. Say which word is hiding inside it.

Now you need something to answer with.

What to know first

കാരണം — *kāraṇam* — a reason; and so, “because”

It is a **noun** first. *Kāraṇam* is a reason, a cause, the thing behind something — and Malayalam then uses that same noun to join two statements, the way English uses *the reason is* before sliding into *because*.

The word is Sanskrit, कारण (*kāraṇa*), taken whole. That puts it in the same company as ചിന്ത, the thought-noun that *cintikkuka* stands on, and സുപ്രഭാതം, the good-morning this book teaches — Malayalam borrows a Sanskrit noun and puts it to work without reshaping it.

Grammar Lens: it sits between the two halves

Say the thing, then the word, then the reason:

what happened	എനിക്ക് മലയാളം ഇഷ്ടം
the joiner	കാരണം
why	(your reason)

This is the everyday one, the word a person reaches for in speech. It asks nothing of the sentences on either side of it — neither half is rebuilt, the same way the quotative left a quoted sentence alone.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *kāraṇam*
- the question and the joiner one after the other — *entukoṇṭṭu ... kāraṇam*
- what the word means before it means “because”
- two other Sanskrit nouns this book took whole

Before you move on

What is *kāraṇam* as a noun? (**A reason, a cause.**) What job does it do between two statements? (**Because.**) And what is the question it answers? (***Entukoṇṭū.***)

73.3 എന്തുകൊണ്ടെന്നാൽ (entukoṇṭennāl) — the long one, on the page

Say the everyday word for *because*.

Today's is the one you will read rather than say, and it is long enough to be worth taking slowly.

What to know first

എന്തുകൊണ്ടെന്നാൽ — *entukoṇṭennāl* — **because** (written, explaining)

Put it beside the question from two pages ago and the first half is the same letters:

എന്തുകൊണ്ട്	why
എന്തുകൊണ്ടെന്നാൽ	because

The answer carries the question inside it. That is the thing to see on the page — a long unfamiliar word with a word you know at the front of it stops being unfamiliar, and this one is signposted more clearly than most.

This book does not take the tail apart for you. The pieces after എന്തുകൊണ്ട് are read different ways by different grammars, and guessing between them would teach you something that might be wrong.

Grammar Lens: which one to use

speaking, everyday	കാരണം
writing, explaining	എന്തുകൊണ്ടെന്നാൽ

Both join a statement to its reason and neither rebuilds either half. **Reach for കാരണം when you talk.** Meeting the long one on a notice or in a written explanation is what this lesson is for, and a

reader who can see the question word inside it has already got most of the way.

Your turn

- *Look:* at the long word and find the question word at its front

എന്തുകൊണ്ടെന്നാൽ

Say these aloud:

- *entukoṇṭṭū ... entukoṇṭennāl*
- which of the two because-words you would use out loud
- why this book stops short of taking the ending apart

Before you move on

What does എന്തുകൊണ്ടെന്നാൽ mean? (**Because.**) Which word can you see at the front of it? (എന്തുകൊണ്ട് — *why.*) And which because-word would you say rather than write? (*Kāraṇam.*)

73.4 (asking and answering why) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Ask *why*, and say which word you already had is sitting at the front of it.

Grammar Lens: a question and two answers

to ask	എന്തുകൊണ്ട് <i>entukoṇṭṭū</i>
to answer, speaking	കാരണം <i>kāraṇam</i>
to answer, writing	എന്തുകൊണ്ടെന്നാൽ <i>entukoṇṭennāl</i>

Until this chapter, cause could not be handled in either direction. There was no way to ask what was behind something and no way to give it. Three words close both halves at once, and two of the three are built on material you had: *entukoṇṭṭū* on the word for *what*, and the written one on *entukoṇṭṭū* itself.

കാരണം is the one to have in your mouth. The long one is for reading.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- the three words in the table
- which two of them share their opening letters, and why
- which one you would use out loud, and which on a notice
- the question word this chapter is built on, from chapter two

Before you move on

How do you ask *why*? (***Entukonṭū***.) What does *kāraṇam* mean on its own, before it means *because*? (**A reason.**) And which of the two because-words carries the question inside it? (***Entukonṭennāl***.)

Chapter 74

One Ending, Two Sentences

Modes: 🗣️ voice (4) 🖱️ Hands-free start: all 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say what I am going somewhere in order to do, and say what I am able to do.

From cold: the -uka to -aan swap, the purpose sentence it builds in front of another verb, and the ability sentence it builds in front of kazhiyum — with the person in the dative, the way knowing already works.

74.1 -ആൻ — one ending swapped for another

Say the verb for *to read*. Then say two more verbs from that chapter, and listen to how all of them end.

That shared ending is about to be replaced.

What to know first

-ആൻ — *-āṇ* — the “to do it” form

Every verb you have met ends in **-ഉക** when it is sitting in a dictionary. Take that ending off and put **-ആൻ** on instead:

the dictionary form	the -ആൻ form
വായിക്കുക <i>vāyikkuka</i>	വായിക്കാൻ <i>vāyikkāṇ</i>
പോകുക <i>pōkuka</i>	പോകാൻ <i>pōkāṇ</i>
കാണുക <i>kāṇuka</i>	കാണാൻ <i>kāṇāṇ</i>

Nothing else in the word changes. The piece in front of the ending — the stem — stays exactly as it was, so a verb you can say you can already swap.

This is the ending Malayalam builds two separate things on, and the next two lessons are those two things. Getting the swap into your hand now makes both of them free.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *vāyikkuka ... vāyikkān*
- *pōkuka ... pōkān*
- *kāṇuka ... kāṇān*
- which part of each word stayed still

Before you move on

Which ending comes off? (-ഉക.) Which goes on? (-ആൻ.) And what happens to the rest of the word? (**Nothing** — the stem does not move.)

74.2 വായിക്കാൻ പോകുന്നു — going in order to do something

Swap the ending on three verbs: *to read*, *to go*, *to see*.

Now put one of those in front of another verb and you have said why you are doing it.

What to know first

ഞാൻ വായിക്കാൻ പോകുന്നു.

ñān vāyikkān pōkunnu — “I am going **in order to read**.”

The -ആൻ form comes **first**, and the verb that actually happens comes **last**. Read it in that order and it says: *I — to-read — go*.

English puts the purpose after the verb and often needs a word for it — *I am going to read, I came to see you*. Malayalam puts the purpose in front and needs no extra word at all: the ending is the whole of it.

കാണാൻ വന്നു <i>kāṇāṇ vannu</i>	came in order to see
പറയാൻ വന്നു <i>parayāṇ vannu</i>	came in order to say

Grammar Lens: the order is the meaning

Malayalam has put the important verb last all along — the quotative chapter said the same thing about a reported sentence, where the saying came at the end. **This is that habit again.** The reason goes in front, the event goes at the back, and the reader hears what you did last.

That order is worth expecting rather than learning per construction: when a sentence in this language starts with something that is not a verb you can finish, keep going — the verb you need is at the end.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *ñān vāyikkāṇ pōkunnu*
- *kāṇāṇ vannu*
- which of the two verbs in each sentence is the thing that happened
- where English would put the purpose that Malayalam puts first
- the dictionary form of the going-verb, and then its -ആൻ form

Before you move on

Which comes first, the purpose or the event? (**The purpose.**) How do you say “I am going in order to read”? (*Ñān vāyikkāṇ pōkunnu.*) And how many extra words does Malayalam need for *in order to*? (**None** — the ending does it.)

74.3 കഴിയും (kalyum) — “can”, built the way knowing is built

Say *enikkū malayālani ariyāni*. Say which word in it means *I*, and what shape that word is in.

Today’s sentence is built the same way.

What to know first

എനിക്ക് വായിക്കാൻ കഴിയും.

enikkū vāyikkāṇ kalyum — “I can read.”

Three pieces, and **two of them you already had**: *enikkū*, the dative *to me* that the knowing sentence uses, and *vāyikkāṇ*, the -ആൻ form from two pages ago. The new word is കഴിയും, and what it says is that the thing is possible.

Ability arrives at you in Malayalam. It is not something you do. The knowing chapter said this in as many words — knowing arrives, so *I* leaves the subject slot and turns into *to me*. Can behaves identically:

എനിക്ക് മലയാളം അറിയാം	Malayalam is known to me
എനിക്ക് വായിക്കാൻ കഴിയും	reading is possible to me

English makes both of these an action with *I* at the front — *I know*, *I can*. Malayalam puts the person in the dative and lets the ability be the subject.

Grammar Lens: one ending, two jobs

The -ആൻ form has now done both of the things this chapter promised:

വായിക്കാൻ പോകുന്നു	going in order to read
വായിക്കാൻ കഴിയും	able to read

Same ending, same swap, two different sentences — and the word after it decides which one you are saying.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *enikkũ vāyikkān kalīyumi*
- the knowing sentence and the can sentence one after the other
- what the two of them share at the front
- *pōkān kalīyumi* — being able to go

Before you move on

How do you say *I can read*? (***Enikku vāyikkān kalīyumi.***) What shape is the word for *I* in? (**The dative** — *to me.*) And which sentence you already knew is built the same way? (**The one about knowing Malayalam.**)

74.4 (one ending, two sentences) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Take *to read*, *to go* and *to see* out of the dictionary and swap their endings.

Grammar Lens: the swap, and what it buys

One swap: -ഉക off, -ആൻ on, stem untouched.

what follows the -ആൻ form	what the sentence says
a verb that happened	in order to — <i>vāyikkān pōkunnu</i>
കഴിയും	can — <i>enikkũ vāyikkān kalīyumi</i>

Two sentences from one ending, and the word after it decides which.

Neither needed a new verb: every verb in this chapter came out of the reading and going chapters, and the only genuinely new word is *kalīyumi*.

The ability sentence also puts the person in the **dative**, the way the knowing sentence does. That is the second time this language has said the same thing: some things are done by you, and some arrive at you — and it marks which is which rather than leaving you to guess.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- the swap on three verbs

- *ñān vāyikkān pōkunnū*
- *enikkū vāyikkān kalīyumi*
- which of those two has the person in the dative, and why

Before you move on

Which ending comes off and which goes on? (-ഉക **off**, -ആൻ **on**.)
 What does the -ആൻ form mean in front of another verb? (**In order to**.) And what does it mean in front of *kalīyumi*? (**Can**.)

Chapter 75

When, and If

Modes: ⇄ voice (4) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can ask when something will happen, say when one thing happens relative to another, and set a condition.

From cold: the question word for time built out of the now/then pair, the -umbol ending that fixes one event against another, and the -aal ending that leaves it conditional — plus which tense form each one is built on.

75.1 എപ്പോൾ (eppōl) — “when?”

Two words for time are already yours. Say the one that means *now*, then the one that means *then*. Listen to what is the same in them.

You’ll want to know: എപ്പോൾ

എപ്പോൾ — *eppōl* — when?

The lesson that named the three beginnings promised that when you met a new word in this family, you would be taught one and work out the rest. Here is that promise, and you are owed only a third of it:

word	meaning
ഇപ്പോൾ <i>ippōl</i>	now
അപ്പോൾ <i>appōl</i>	then
എപ്പോൾ <i>eppōl</i>	when?

You were handed the top two rows on the way to taking your leave. The bottom row changes the one letter at the front that ഇവിടെ / അവിടെ / എവിടെ changed, in the same direction: near, far, **a question**. Nothing else moves.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

That unmoving piece is പോൾ, and Tamil holds the set together the same way: the lesson that taught you *now* already showed you ഇப்பോതു (*ippōtu*), and the question form is எப்போது (*eppōtu*). പോൾ is not a word you can use on its own — it only ever turns up carrying one of these three openers, so this book will not ask you to use it alone. Remember it anyway. It comes back in the next lesson, on a verb.

Grammar Lens: asking rearranges nothing

നിങ്ങൾ എപ്പോൾ പോകും?

ninīṇaḷ eppōḷ pōkumī — “When will you go?”

The question word sits in front of the verb, and the verb stays in the future form the tense lesson gave you. **Nothing is rearranged to ask a question.**

Your turn

- Say it: *ippōḷ ... appōḷ ... eppōḷ*, and hear the one letter walk
- Look: at ഇപ്പോൾ, അപ്പോൾ, എപ്പോൾ and find the part that is the same in all three
- Say it: *ninīṇaḷ eppōḷ pōkumī?*
- Say it: which of the three is a question, without looking

Before you move on

Which letter did you change to get *when?* out of *now?* (**The first one** — ഇ to എ.) Can പോൾ stand alone? (**No** — it needs an opener.)

75.2 വരുമ്പോൾ (varumpōl) — “when he comes”

Say the question word for time. Then say the future of *to go* and the future of *to come*.

What to know first

അവൻ വരുമ്പോൾ ഞാൻ പോകും.

avan varumpōl ñān pōkum — “When he comes, I will go.”

English needs a word in front of the clause: *when* he comes. **Malayalam needs no word at all.** It puts the whole idea on the end of the verb, and the clause is one word long.

That is the thing to take from this lesson. Look for the join at the **end of a verb** rather than in front of a clause, and a sentence that looked long stops being long.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

Write the future you already know, then put പോൾ after it:

step

the future	വരും <i>varum</i>
plus പോൾ	വരും + പോൾ
written	വരുമ്പോൾ <i>varumpōl</i>

The ു that ends വരും is an *m*. When a letter follows it, that *m* is written joined to what comes next — വ, the same shape you already read in ഒമ്പത് (*ombat*), “nine”.

So the ending is not new material. It is a future form you have had since the tense lesson, with the time-piece from the last lesson stuck on the back.

Tamil builds it the same way, from the same two parts: വரும்போது (*varumpōtu*).

Grammar Lens: it is not a question any more

എപ്പോൾ asks. വരുമ്പോൾ does not.

എപ്പോൾ വരും?	When will he come?
വരുമ്പോൾ	when he comes

Both carry പോൾ and they are related. But one waits for an answer, and the other fixes one event against another inside a sentence that keeps going. **If പോൾ is on the end of a verb, nobody is being asked anything.**

Your turn

- Say it: *varunī*, then *varumpōl*
- Say it: *avan varumpōl ñān pōkumī*
- Look: at വരുമ്പോൾ and find the ന്ന you know from ഒമ്പത്
- Say it: how many words Malayalam spends on *when he comes*
- Say it: which of the two verbs in the sentence is the one that happens last

Before you move on

Where does Malayalam put *when* — in front of the clause, or on the end of the verb? (**On the end of the verb.**) What two pieces are inside വരുമ്പോൾ? (വരും and പോൾ.)

75.3 വന്നാൽ (vannāl) — “if he comes”

Say *when he comes*. Then say the past of *to come* — the one form on this track that reshapes its stem.

What to know first

അവൻ വന്നാൽ ഞാൻ പോകും.

avan vannāl ñān pōkumī — “**If he comes**, I will go.”

Same shape as the last lesson: no word in front of the clause, the join on the end of the verb. **One ending is the whole difference between two sentences:**

അവൻ വരുമ്പോൾ ഞാൻ പോകും	when he comes, I will go
അവൻ വന്നാൽ ഞാൻ പോകും	if he comes, I will go

When says it will happen and fixes your going to it. *If* does not say it will happen at all.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

Take the **past** form and swap its last vowel for ആൽ:

past	conditional
വന്നു <i>vannu</i>	വന്നാൽ <i>vannāl</i>
പോയി <i>pōyi</i>	പോയാൽ <i>pōyāl</i>

Both rows lose a vowel and gain the same ending, and whatever the past did to the stem of *to come*, the conditional keeps.

Grammar Lens: the past form is not about the past

Read *avan vannāl ñān pōkum* again. **He has not come.** He may never come. Yet the form it is built on is the one that means *came*. The obvious reading is the wrong one. The past form is doing no work about time here — it is the shape the language reaches for to build a condition, and the time is carried by പോകും at the end. **Nothing in a Malayalam sentence is settled until you reach the last verb** — the same habit the purpose lesson pointed at, from a different direction.

What you've built

എന്നാൽ, the but-word, and എന്തുകൊണ്ടെന്നാൽ, the written *because*, both end in this shape. The lesson that taught the written *because* said it would not take that tail apart, because grammars read it different ways.

That still stands. Knowing the ending does not settle those two words. What has changed is smaller and real: the ending is now yours on verbs where nobody disagrees about it.

Your turn

- Say it: *vannu*, then *vannāl*

- *Say it:* *pōyi*, then *pōyāl*
- *Say it:* *avan vannāl ñān pōkum*
- *Say it:* the same sentence with *when* instead of *if*
- *Look:* at വന്നാൽ and വരുമ്പോൾ, and find where the two stop matching

Before you move on

Which form does the conditional build on? (**The past.**) Does that make the sentence about the past? (**No** — the last verb carries the time.)

75.4 (when, and if) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say the words for *now* and *then*, and then build the question word out of them without looking.

Grammar Lens: one piece, three jobs

Everything in this chapter hangs off where the join sits.

എപ്പോൾ	asks — a question, waiting for an answer
-പ്പോൾ	on a verb — <i>when</i> it happens, and it will
-ആൽ	on a verb — <i>if</i> it happens, and it may not

The first is a word of its own and stands in front of a verb. The other two are never words of their own — they arrive stuck to the back of one.

So the test when you meet a long verb on a page is the same test every time. **Read to the end of it.** What is hanging off the back tells you whether the sentence is asking, fixing a time, or setting a condition.

What you've built

Two builds, from the forms the tense lesson gave you:

start from	you get
the future വരും	വരുമ്പോൾ — when he comes
the past വന്നു	വന്നാൽ — if he comes

One reaches for the future form, the other for the past, and **neither one is about the time you would expect**. The time of the whole sentence is settled by the verb at the end.

Your turn

- *Say it: ippō! ... appō! ... eppō!*
- *Say it: ninñal eppō! pōkum?*
- *Say it: avan varumpō! ñān pōkum*
- *Say it: the same sentence again, but only possibly — avan vannāl ñān pōkum*
- *Say it: pōyi, then its conditional*
- *Look: at എപ്പോൾ, വരുമ്പോൾ and വന്നാൽ, and say which of the three is asking you something*

Before you move on

Which of the three can stand as a word on its own? (എപ്പോൾ — the other two only ever ride on a verb.) Which one says the thing will happen? (-ുമ്പോൾ.) Which one leaves it open? (-ആൽ.) And which form does each build on — future or past? (-ുമ്പോൾ **on the future**, -ആൽ **on the past**.)

Chapter 76

Asking For It

Modes: ⇄ voice (2) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 2 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can ask somebody whether they want something.

From cold: offer tea, and give both answers – the acceptance and the refusal the track already had.

76.1 വേണോ (vēṇō) — “do you want?”

Say *wanted*. Then say the one letter Malayalam puts on the end of something to turn it into a question.

Put them together before you read on.

You’ll want to know: വേണോ

ചായ വേണോ?

cāya vēṇō? — “Do you want tea?”

If you built വേണോ in the warm-up, this lesson taught you nothing, which is the point. വേണം loses its ending and takes the question letter you already had, and that is the whole derivation.

Grammar Lens: a three-way set you now own

വേണോ?	do you want it?
വേണം	yes — wanted
വേണ്ട	no — not wanted

That is a whole exchange. One person offers, the other accepts or declines, and every word in it is a form of the same root. Notice which one arrived first. The track gave you **the refusal** long before the request, so for a while you could say no to an offer you had no way of making. Both halves are yours now.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *cāya vēṇō?*
- both answers — *vēṇami*, then *vēṇṭa*
- the offer with water instead of tea
- which letter turned the statement into the question

Before you move on

How do you offer somebody tea? (ചായ വേണോ?) How do you accept? (വേണം.) And how do you decline? (വേണ്ട.)

76.2 (wanted, and not) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say *wanted* and *not wanted*, and hear how much of the two words is the same.

Grammar Lens: one root, a whole exchange

ചായ വേണോ?	do you want tea?
വേണം	yes
വേണ്ട	no

Three words, one root, and the shortest complete conversation this book has given you. **Only one of the three was new this chapter** — the question form you can build yourself, and the acceptance the refusal had been pointing at all along.

What you've built

The ability to **ask for something**, which needs one more thing said about it.

എനിക്ക് വെള്ളം വേണം.

To me, water is wanted. You are not the subject of your own wanting — the water is. That is the same shape knowing and age already took, and it is the habit to carry forward: when something happens *to* a person in Malayalam, the person goes in the dative and the thing goes to the front.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- offer tea, accept, then decline
- *enikkū vellam vēṇamī*
- who the subject of that sentence is
- the three forms in the order an exchange uses them

Before you move on

Offer somebody water. (വെള്ളം വേണോ?) Accept it. (വേണം.)
And in *enikkū vellam vēṇamī*, who is the subject? (**The water.**)

Chapter 77

Not There, Not So

Modes: ⇐ voice (2) 👁 eyes (1) ⇐ Hands-free start: first 1 of 3 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say that something is not what it was called, and I can check something I think I already know.

From cold: both negatives and the question each one answers, and the tag built from the second of them.

77.1 അല്ല (alla) — “is not so”

Two words you have had since the opening chapters: the one that says something **is**, and the one that says something **is not there**.

You’ll want to know: അല്ല

ഞാൻ അധ്യാപകൻ അല്ല.

ñān adhyāpakan alla — “**I am not a teacher.**”

അല്ല is the negative of ആണ്. Where ആണ് says *X is Y*, അല്ല says *X is not Y* — and it sits in the same place, at the end, where the sentence closes.

Grammar Lens: Malayalam negates twice, and English only once

You now hold **two** negatives, and they are not interchangeable:

ഇല്ല	it is not there — denies that something exists
അല്ല	it is not so — denies that something is what you called it

English spends one word on both. *There is no tea* and *this is not tea* both use **not**, and Malayalam will not let you.

That is the thing to carry: before you reach for a negative in this language, **ask which question you are answering**. *Is there any?* takes ഇല്ല. *Is it that?* takes അല്ല.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *alla* — is not so
- *ñān adhyāpakan alla*
- which negative answers *is there any tea?*
- which negative answers *is this tea?*

Before you move on

How do you say *I am not a teacher?* (ഞാൻ അധ്യാപകൻ അല്ല.)
Which word does അല്ല negate? (ആണ്.) And which negative would you use to say something is not present? (ഇല്ല.)

77.2 അല്ലേ (allē) — “isn’t it?”

Say *is not so*. Then say the letter Malayalam adds to turn a statement into a genuine question.

You'll want to know: അല്ലേ

നിങ്ങൾ അധ്യാപകൻ ആണ്, അല്ലേ?

nirññāḷ adhyāpakan āṇ, allē? — “You are a teacher, aren’t you?”

Look at the front of it. അല്ലേ opens on അല്ല, the word from the last lesson, and that containment is the whole of why it means what it means: it hangs “*or is it not so?*” on the end of a statement you have already made.

Grammar Lens: asking, and asking for agreement

Malayalam has **two ways to end a sentence with a question**, and they want different things back:

-ഓ

a genuine question — *I do not know; tell me*

അല്ലേ

a tag — *I think I know; agree with me*

ചായ വേണോ? genuinely does not know whether you want tea.

നിങ്ങൾ അധ്യാപകൻ ആണ്, അല്ലേ? is fairly sure you are one and is checking.

English hides this difference inside intonation and a repeated verb — *you are, aren’t you*. Malayalam puts it in one word and does not change the sentence in front of it.

Your turn

- *Say it: allē?*
- *Say it: nirññāḷ adhyāpakan āṇ, allē?*
- *Look:* at അല്ലേ and find അല്ല inside it
- *Say it:* which ending you would use if you genuinely did not know

Before you move on

What does അല്ലേ invite — an answer, or agreement?

(**Agreement.**) Which word is hiding at the front of it? (അല്ല.)

And which ending asks a question you truly do not know the answer

to? (-ഓ.)

77.3 (not there, not so) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say both negatives, and say which question each one answers.

Grammar Lens: one English word, two Malayalam ones

	denies	pairs with
ഇല്ല	that it is there	<i>is there any?</i>
അല്ല	that it is so	<i>is it that?</i>

English spends one word where Malayalam spends two, so the choice is a decision English never made you make. Make it by looking at the question, not at the word you would use at home.

അല്ല is the negative of ആണ്, which is why it closes a sentence in the same place ആണ് does.

What you've built

The ability to say what something **is not** — and, from that same word, to check something you think you already know.

നിങ്ങൾ അധ്യാപകൻ ആണ്, അല്ലേ?

അല്ലേ carries അല്ല at its front, and hangs “*or is it not so?*” on a statement. It invites agreement where -ഓ asks for an answer.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *ñān adhyāpakan alla*
- the same idea as a tag question about somebody else
- which negative answers *is there any?*
- which negative answers *is it that?*
- the difference between what -ഓ wants and what അല്ലേ wants

Before you move on

Say *I am not a teacher*. (ഞാൻ അധ്യാപകൻ അല്ല.) How many negatives does Malayalam have where English has one? (**Two**.) And what does അല്ല ask for? (**Agreement**.)

Chapter 78

Whose It Is

Modes: 🗨 voice (2) 👁 eyes (1) 🖱 Hands-free start: none of the 3 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say that any noun owns something, not only that I do.

From cold: both genitive endings, what decides between them, and the owner-first order the phrase always takes.

78.1 അധ്യാപകന്റെ (adhyāpakanre) — “the teacher’s”

Say *my*. Then say the word for *teacher*.

You have owned the first of those since the second chapter, and you have never been able to do to any other word what it does.

Grammar Lens: the ending was there all along

എന്റെ was handed to you whole, as a single word meaning *my*. Look at its end:

എന്റെ	my
അധ്യാപകന്റെ	the teacher’s

-ന്റെ is a suffix, and it makes whatever it lands on the owner. That is the one thing this lesson adds, and it turns a word you memorised into a machine you can run.

അധ്യാപകന്റെ പുസ്തകം

adhyāpakanre pustakam — “the teacher’s book”

The owner comes first, wearing the ending; the thing owned follows bare. English does the same with *’s* and the opposite with *of*. Malayalam only has the first order.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

The script lesson for എന്റെ already showed you ന്റെ on its own, as a conjunct to read. It was a piece of writing then. It is a piece of grammar now, and it is the same piece.

That is worth expecting from this language: **something introduced as a shape often turns out later to be a part.**

Your turn

- Say it: *adhyāpakanre* — the teacher’s
- Say it: *adhyāpakanre pustakam*
- Look: at എന്റെ and അധ്യാപകന്റെ, and find where they agree
- Say it: which of the two words in the phrase is the owner

Before you move on

What does -ന്റെ do to a noun? (**Makes it the owner.**) How do you say *the teacher’s book*? (അധ്യാപകന്റെ പുസ്തകം.) And which comes first, the owner or the thing? (**The owner.**)

78.2 അമ്മയുടെ (ammayuṭe) — “mother’s”

Say *the teacher’s book*. Then take the ending off and say the teacher again on their own.

Grammar Lens: the same job, a different ending

അമ്മയുടെ പുസ്തകം

ammayuṭe pustakam — “mother’s book”

Not -ന്റെ. -ഉടെ, and a യ appears in front of it.

അധ്യാപകൻ takes -ന്റെ. അമ്മ takes -യുടെ. Two nouns, two landings.

this noun	ending
അധ്യാപകൻ	-ന്റെ
അമ്മ	-യുടെ

Which of the two a noun takes is learned with the noun, not worked out from its last sound — and you have had the proof since your first chapter. നീന്റെ is the owner-form of നീ. നീ ends in a vowel, exactly as അമ്മ does, and it does not take -യുടെ at all.

What is reliable is the shape of the phrase. Owner first with its ending, then the thing owned — that never varies, and it is what lets any noun in this book own something.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *ammayuṭe* — mother's
- *ammayuṭe pustakam*
- both owners in a row — *adhyāpakanre, ammayuṭe*
- what decided which ending each one took

Before you move on

Which ending does അമ്മ take? (-യുടെ.) How do you say *mother's book*? (അമ്മയുടെ പുസ്തകം.) And who picks the ending — you, or the noun? (**The noun.**)

78.3 (whose it is) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say *my*, and then say what its last piece does when you put it on somebody else.

Grammar Lens: two endings, one job, and the noun decides

owner	ending
അധ്യാപകന്റെ	-ന്റെ
അമ്മയുടെ	-യുടെ

One job — *whose it is* — and **which of the two endings a noun takes comes with the noun**. നീന്റെ already showed you that: നീ ends in a vowel, as അമ്മ does, and takes -ന്റെ all the same. Then the phrase is built the same way every time: **owner first with the ending, thing second and bare**. *adhyāpakanre pustakamī, ammayuṭe pustakamī*.

What you've built

A third possessor, and every one after it.
എന്റെ and നീന്റെ were handed over whole — *my* and *your*, two words to memorise. Naming the ending inside them turns a closed pair into an open rule: **any noun this book has taught you can now own something**. That is the difference between a word and a piece of grammar, and it is worth looking for: when two words you were given separately end the same way, the ending is usually doing the work.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *adhyāpakanre pustakamī*
- *ammayuṭe pustakamī*
- which ending each took, and what decided it
- *my book*, using the word you have had since the second chapter
- which comes first in the phrase, the owner or the thing

Before you move on

Which ending does അധ്യാപകൻ take? (-ന്റെ.) And അമ്മ? (-യുടെ.) Can you tell which one a new noun will take by listening

to its end? (**No** — നീ ends like അമ്മ and takes നിന്റെ.) And what does either one do to the noun it lands on? (**Makes it the owner.**)

Chapter 79

How Much Of It

Modes: ⇐ voice (2) ⇐ eyes (2) ⇐ Hands-free start: none of the 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say that something is very good, really big or a bit small, instead of only good, big or small.

From cold: both new degree words, which of them belongs in writing, the slot they stand in, and the third filler the learner already owned.

79.1 വളരെ (valare) — very

Say *good*. Say *big*. Then say where either one stands when you put it with a thing-word, and what happens to its shape when you do.

You'll want to know: വളരെ

വളരെ — *valare* — very.

Since the chapter that gave you *good*, *big* and *small*, you have owned five qualities and no way to grade any of them. A thing could be good. It could not be **very** good. This is the word that fixes that, and it costs nothing to use, because it works the way the quality words already work: **it stands in front, and nothing changes shape.**

നല്ല <i>nalla</i>	good
വളരെ നല്ല <i>valare nalla</i>	very good
വലിയ <i>valiya</i>	big
വളരെ വലിയ <i>valare valiya</i>	very big

Look at the second column of that table and then at the first. *nalla* is *nalla* in both rows. English does the same thing — *good* survives *very good* intact — so there is nothing new to learn here beyond the word itself.

Now put a thing on the end of it and you have a three-word chain, each piece standing in front of the one it describes:

വളരെ നല്ല പുസ്തകം — *valare nalla pustakam* — a very good book.

Read that right to left and it unpacks cleanly: a book; a good book; a very good book. Each new word reaches forward over everything after it.

What you've built

Five qualities, each of them now with a volume knob.

One word multiplied what five lessons gave you, which is what the small function words in a language tend to do.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *valare*
- *valare nalla*
- *valare valiya*
- *valare nalla pustakam*
- what happened to *nalla* when *valare* arrived in front of it

Before you move on

What is *valare*? (**very.**) Does it stand before the quality word or after it? (**Before.**) And does the quality word change when it arrives? (**No.**)

79.2 ഒരൂപാദ് (orupāṭṭ) — a lot

Say *very good* out loud, and then say which of the two words in it you learned last.

You'll want to know: ഒരുപാട്

ഒരുപാട് — *orupāṭṭu* — a lot, a great deal.

It stands where *vaḷare* stands and does the same job:

ഒരുപാട് നല്ല — *orupāṭṭu nalla* — very good, a really good one.

The two are not interchangeable in feel, and the difference is one of register rather than of meaning. വളരെ is what a notice, a newspaper or a teacher writes. ഒരുപാട് is what a person says to you across a table. A learner who owns only one of them will be understood; a learner who owns both will sound like they have listened to somebody.

There is one thing *orupāṭṭu* can do that a pure degree word cannot, and it is worth having: **it also measures an amount of stuff.**

in front of	means
a quality word	very — <i>orupāṭṭu nalla</i>
a thing word	a lot of — <i>orupāṭṭu vellam</i>

ഒരുപാട് വെള്ളം is a lot of water. English needs an extra word there — *a lot OF water* — and Malayalam needs nothing, because the word already sits in front of what it measures and that is the whole relationship.

What you've built

Two ways up, one for the page and one for the room.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *orupāṭṭu*
- *orupāṭṭu nalla*
- *orupāṭṭu vellam*, and say which of those two used it as an amount
- *vaḷare nalla*, then *orupāṭṭu nalla*, and say which one you would write down

Before you move on

What is *orupāṭṭu*? (**a lot.**) Which of the pair belongs in writing? (***vaḷare*.**) And what does *orupāṭṭu* mean in front of a thing rather than a quality? (**A lot of it.**)

79.3 one slot, in front — three words that fit it

Say the two new words of this chapter, and say what both of them did to the quality word standing after them.

Grammar Lens: the position, not the word

Both new words went in the same place. That place is the thing to learn, because once you can see it, a word you have never met can be dropped into it and you will know what it is doing.

Immediately in front of a quality word, Malayalam keeps one open slot for how much. Fill it or leave it empty; nothing else in the phrase reacts.

slot	quality	what you said
—	വലിയ	big
കുറച്ച്	വലിയ	a bit big
വളരെ	വലിയ	very big
ഒരുപാട്	വലിയ	really big

Read the *valiya* column downward. It is the same word in every row.

The slot carries all of the grading and the quality word carries none of it, which is why one new word graded all five of your qualities at once rather than one of them.

The third filler is not new. കുറച്ച് was handed to you as *a little* for amounts of rice and water, and it stands in this slot too, at the small end — the same word, the same position, pointing down instead of up. So the ladder is already complete, and two thirds of it were free:

ഒരുപാട് · വളരെ · കുറച്ച് — a lot, very, a bit.

And the slot nests with the one you already know. The quality word stands in front of the thing; the degree word stands in front of the quality. Each piece reaches forward over everything after it, and nothing ever changes shape:

വളരെ വലിയ പുസ്തകം — *valare valiya pustakam* — a very big book.

What you've built

A grade for every quality, and a place to put the next degree word you meet.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *valiya*, then the same word with each of the three fillers in front
- which filler you already owned before this chapter
- what changed about *valiya* across all four of those phrases
- where the degree word stands, and where the quality word stands

Before you move on

Where does a degree word go? (**Immediately in front of the quality word.**) What does the quality word do about it? (**Nothing — it does not change.**) And which of the three fillers points down rather than up? (*kuraccũ*.)

79.4 (how much of it) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say *very*, say *a lot*, and say which of the two you would put in a letter.

Grammar Lens: one slot, three fillers, nothing else moves

filler	reading	where it came from
ഒരുപാട് <i>orupāṭṭ</i>	really, a lot	this chapter, the spoken one
വളരെ <i>valare</i>	very	this chapter, the written one
കുറച്ച് <i>kuraccũ</i>	a bit	the short-answers chapter, already yours

The slot sits **immediately in front of the quality word**, and the quality word never changes: *nalla* is *nalla* whether or not something stands before it.

Nest the two positions and the order comes out the same every time — **how much, then what kind, then the thing**:

വളരെ നല്ല പുസ്തകം — *valare nalla pustakam* — a very good book.
One of the three also measures stuff rather than qualities: ഒരുപാട്
വെള്ളം is a lot of water, with no joining word between them.

What you've built

Every quality you own, at three settings.

The five qualities were flat before this chapter — a thing was good or it was not — and two words turned each of them into a range. That is the return this language pays on small words standing in fixed places, and it is worth watching for: **when a word does not change shape, look at what stands next to it.**

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *vaḷare nalla*
- *orupātũ valiya*
- *vaḷare nalla pustakam*
- *orupātũ vellam*, and say what *orupātũ* is measuring there
- the filler that points down rather than up
- what the quality word does when a degree word arrives in front of it

Before you move on

Which degree word belongs in writing? (*valare*.) Which one do you hear across a table? (*orupātū*.) Where do both of them stand? (Immediately in front of the quality word.)

Chapter 80

Where You Are From

Modes: ⇨ voice (3) 👁 eyes (1) ⇨ Hands-free start: first 2 of 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can answer where I am from with a place rather than with a category, and say that somebody is a Malayali.

From cold: the three place words in order of scale, the person word and where it came from, and the fact that placing somebody needs no new grammar at all.

80.1 ഉറൂ (ūrū) — town

What was *nāṭŭ*? And when somebody asks you which one you are from, what could you say back?

You'll want to know: ഉറൂ

ഉറൂ — *ūrū* — a town, a village, the settled place somebody is from.

nāṭŭ was handed to you with a warning printed inside it: **its scale floats**. A *nāṭŭ* can be a country, a district or a home region, and the situation decides which. That is useful and it is also why the question *which nāṭŭ are you from* was, until now, a question you could not answer — you had the word for the category and no word for a place.

ഉറൂ pins the small end down. Where *nāṭŭ* floats, *ūrū* is **the settlement** — somewhere with houses in it and a name.

	covers
ഉറൂർ <i>ūrŭ</i>	one settled place
നാട് <i>nāṭŭ</i>	anything from a district to a country

It is an old word and a shared one. Tamil says *ūr* for the same thing, and it is buried in place-names the length of the south — so a name you cannot read yet may still end in a piece you now know.

What you’ve built

The small end of the question you have been able to hear since the ground words, and not answer.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *ūrŭ*
- it once more, slowly
- *nāṭŭ*, then *ūrŭ*, and say which of the two has a fixed size

Before you move on

What is an *ūrŭ*? (**A town — one settled place.**) And which is the wider word, *ūrŭ* or *nāṭŭ*? (***nāṭŭ*.**)

80.2 കേരളം ഇന്ത്യ (kēraḷam, indya) — Kerala and India

Say the word for a town, and say the wider word it sits inside.

You’ll want to know: കേരളം, ഇന്ത്യ

കേരളം — *kēraḷani* — Kerala, the state this language is spoken in.

ഇന്ത്യ — *indya* — India, the country Kerala is part of.

Until this page, every place word you owned named a **kind** of place: ground, forest, home country, town. None of them named **one**. These two

do, and that is the whole difference between describing where you are from and saying it.

Now the floating word has fixed points to float between:

ഊര് <i>ūrŭ</i>	a town
കേരളം <i>kēraḷam</i>	Kerala
ഇന്ത്യ <i>indya</i>	India

Each of the three can answer *which nāṭŭ are you from*, and choosing among them is the same choice English makes when it answers that question with a town, a region or a country: **you pick the one your listener will recognise.**

Say *kēraḷam* slowly and you will hear the retroflex **ḷ** in the middle of it — the sound you met in the name of the language itself. It is the same letter doing the same work, and it is worth noticing that the place and the tongue spoken there are built on the same sound.

What you've built

An answer, where you had only a category.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *kēraḷam*
- *indya*
- the three place words in order, smallest first
- which of the three you would give to somebody far away

Before you move on

Which of the two is the state? (*kēraḷam*.) Which is the country? (*indya*.) And which sound sits in the middle of the first one? (**The retroflex ḷ.**)

80.3 മലയാളി (malayāḷi) — a Malayali

Say *I speak Malayalam*, the sentence you have owned since almost the beginning. Then say the name of the state.

You'll want to know: മലയാളി

മലയാളി — *malayāḷi* — a Malayali: a person of Kerala, a speaker of this language.

You have had most of this word since your fifth chapter's sentence. Put the two side by side and only the tail is different:

മലയാളം <i>malayāḷam</i>	the language
മലയാളി <i>malayāḷi</i>	the person

Everything up to the last piece is shared. -ം **ends the language**, -ി **ends the person**, and you can see the join without being told where it is.

Why it's said this way

The language word is itself built out of two older pieces — **മല** *mala*, a hill, and a second piece meaning a place. **The language is named after the country it grew in**, and the person is then named after the language rather than after the state.

So the chain runs **hill** → **land** → **language** → **person**, and *malayāḷi* sits at the far end of it. Nobody has to tell you that Kerala is hilly for the word to make sense; the word has been saying so the whole time.

Grammar Lens: Malayalam has no separate word for “Keralite”

English keeps two shapes for this job — *India* the place and **Indian** the describing word, *Kerala* and *Keralite*. Malayalam keeps **one**. **മലയാളി is a person-word, not a describing word**, and when you need it to describe somebody you do what this language always does: **stand it in front, unchanged**.

മലയാളി അധ്യാപകൻ — *malayāḷi adhyāpakan* — a Malayali teacher. That is the rule you already have. A quality word stands in front of the thing; a degree word stands in front of the quality; and a person-word used to place somebody stands in front too, with nothing added and nothing altered. **The gentilic costs you no new grammar at all** — which is the reason it waited until now rather than arriving with the place names.

What you've built

A way to say where somebody is from, and the discovery that it needed no machinery.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *malayāḷamī*, then *malayāḷi*, and say where they part
- *malayāḷi adhyāpakan*
- what you had to add to *malayāḷi* to make it describe the teacher
- the two older pieces the language word is built from

Before you move on

What is a *malayāḷi*? (**A person of Kerala, a speaker of this language.**) Which ending makes the person out of the language? (-*ī*.) And what changes when you put the word in front of another one? (**Nothing.**)

80.4 (where you are from) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say the floating word for a home region, and then say the word that pins its small end down.

Grammar Lens: a scale, and a person on it

ഉറൂർ <i>ūrū</i>	a town
കേരളം <i>kēraḷam</i>	Kerala
ഇന്ത്യ <i>indya</i>	India
മലയാളി <i>malayāḷi</i>	a person from there

The first three answer *which nāṭū are you from*, and you pick among them the way English does: **the one your listener will recognise**. The fourth is not a place at all — it is the person, built out of the language word you have owned since almost the beginning, with the

tail changed:

മലയാളം → മലയാളി.

What you've built

The answer to a question you have been able to *hear* for a long time. And the chapter's real finding is what it did **not** need. English carries two shapes — *India* and **Indian**, *Kerala* and *Keralite*. Malayalam carries one, and places somebody by **standing the person-word in front, unchanged**:

മലയാളി അധ്യാപകൻ — *malayāḷi adhyāpakan* — a Malayali teacher. That is the same rule as the quality word before the thing and the degree word before the quality. **Three different jobs, one position, nothing altered.** When a language reuses a position this hard, learning the position is worth more than learning any of the words that fill it.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- the three place words, smallest first
- *malayāḷi*
- where *malayāḷi* came from, and which piece of it is new
- *malayāḷi adhyāpakan*
- what had to change about *malayāḷi* to put it in front of the teacher

Before you move on

Which word names one settled place? (*ūrū.*) Which word names the person rather than the place? (*malayāḷi.*) And how many shapes does Malayalam keep for that job, where English keeps two? (**One.**)

Chapter 81

How Far Away

Modes: ⇐ voice (3) 👁 eyes (1) ⇐ Hands-free start: first 1 of 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say that something is near or far, and ask how far away it is.

From cold: both ends of the distance scale, the question that reads it, and the difference between pointing at a place and measuring across to it.

81.1 അടുത്ത് (aṭutṭṭ̣) — near

Say *here*. Say *there*. Then think about what neither of them tells you: **how far away**.

You'll want to know: അടുത്ത്

അടുത്ത് — *aṭutṭṭ̣* — near, close by.

ഇവിടെ and അവിടെ *point*. They split the world in two — where I am, and where I am not — and that is all they do. Something *avite* might be across the room or across an ocean, and the word is the same either way.

അടുത്ത് **measures**. It is the first word in this track that says **how much space is involved** rather than which side of you it is on.

	does
ഇവിടെ / അവിടെ	point — this side or that
അടുത്ത്	measure — not much space

That is a real division, and it is the reason a learner can have owned *here* and *there* for forty chapters and still be unable to say that the shop is close.

What you've built

The near end of a scale you could previously only point along.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *aṭuttũ*
- it once more, slowly
- *ivite*, then *aṭuttũ*, and say which of the two told you a distance

Before you move on

What does *aṭuttũ* mean? (**Near, close by.**) And what can it tell you that *avite* cannot? (**How far away something is.**)

81.2 അകലെ (akale) — far away

Say the word for *near*. Then say the three-way pattern the pointing words are built on.

You'll want to know: അകലെ

അകലെ — *akale* — far away.

The scale now has both ends:

അടുത്ത് <i>aṭuttũ</i>	near
അകലെ <i>akale</i>	far

Between them you can place anything, and അവിടെ stops having to do a job it was never built for.

Why it's said this way

Look at അകലെ and അവിടെ side by side. Both open with അ, and the pointing pattern you learned says that അ- is the *away* one — *avite*, *that place*, over there.

Resist that. The അ in *akale* is **part of the word**, not the pointing

prefix stuck on the front of it. The pattern is real and this is not an instance of it; the two only look alike.

This is worth a page of its own because the habit it trains is the useful one. **A pattern you have learned will start finding matches everywhere, including where there are none.** The test is never how the word looks — it is whether the other members of the set exist. There is no *ikale* meaning *near* and no *ekale* meaning *how far*, so there is no set, so there is no pattern here.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *akale*
- *aṭuttŭ*, then *akale*
- why the *a* at the front of *akale* is not the pointing prefix
- what you would have to find for it to be one

Before you move on

What is *akale*? (**Far away.**) What is its partner at the other end? (*aṭuttŭ*.) And is its opening *a* the pointing prefix? (**No — it is part of the word.**)

81.3 എത്ര ദൂരം (etra dūram) — how far

Say *far away*. Then say the age question, the long one about what exists to you.

You'll want to know: ദൂരം, and എത്ര on its own

ദൂരം — *dūram* — distance.

aṭuttŭ and *akale* give you two rough settings. **ദൂരം** is the thing itself — the amount of space, which can be asked for and answered with a number.

And you already own the word for asking. **എത്ര** *etra* — *how much*, *how many* — has been sitting inside the age question since you learned it:

നിങ്ങൾക്ക് എത്ര വയസ്സുണ്ട്? — *to you, how much age exists?*

It was a piece of a phrase then. **Now take it out and use it.**

എത്ര ദൂരം? — *etra dūram?* — how much distance? How far?

That is the whole question, and it is two words you were given separately.

Lifting a word out of a phrase you already say is the cheapest vocabulary there is, and it is worth going looking for: a long sentence you learned whole usually has two or three words in it that work on their own.

അടുത്ത്	near — a setting
അകലെ	far — a setting
എത്ര ദൂരം?	how far — a question with a number for an answer

dūram is a borrowing from Sanskrit, where *akale* is inherited. Both are ordinary and neither is grander than the other; Malayalam keeps pairs like this all over, and having both is not a redundancy but a choice of texture.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *dūram*
- *etra dūram?*
- the other question you know that starts with *etra*
- *aṭuttū, akale, etra dūram* — two settings and the question

Before you move on

What is *dūram*? (**Distance.**) What does *etra* mean on its own? (**How much, how many.**) And where had you already met it? (**Inside the age question.**)

81.4 (how far away) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say *near*, then say *far*.

Grammar Lens: pointing and measuring are different jobs

word	job
ഇവിടെ / അവിടെ	point — my side or not my side
അടുത്ത് / അകലെ	measure — a little space or a lot
എത്ര ദൂരം?	ask — and expect a number back

The pointing pair had been yours for a long time and could not answer *how far*, because splitting the world in two is not the same as measuring across it. Something *avite* can be a step away or a country away.

What you've built

A scale, and the question that reads it.

One of the four words cost nothing. എത്ര was already inside the age question you learned whole, doing exactly this job, and the chapter only took it out. **A long sentence you learned whole usually holds two or three words that work on their own** — worth going looking for, in this language and any other.

The chapter also asked you to *refuse* a pattern. അകലെ opens with അ and the pointing prefix is അ-, and they are not the same thing: there is no *ikale* and no *ekale*, so there is no set, so there is no pattern.

A pattern you have learned will find matches where there are none, and the test is always whether the other members exist.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *aṭuttŭ*, then *akale*
- *etra dŭram?*
- which of your words point and which measure
- where *etra* came from
- why *akale* is not built on the pointing prefix

Before you move on

Which word means *near*? (*aṭuttū*.) Which means *far*? (*akale*.)
And how do you ask for the number? (*etra dūrami*?)

Chapter 82

Opening A Conversation

Modes: 🗣️ voice (4) 🖱️ Hands-free start: all 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can call out to somebody I have never met, and I know which of my greetings to use with them.

From cold: both calling words, the ending that makes one of them and why the other has nothing to change, and the rule for choosing among the five greetings already owned.

82.1 ചേട്ടാ (cēṭṭā) — excuse me, brother

Say the word for an **older brother**. Then ask yourself something you have had no way to do yet: **how would you get a stranger’s attention?**

You’ll want to know: ചേട്ടാ

ചേട്ടാ — cēṭṭā — the way you call out to a man you do not know.

You have owned ചേട്ടൻ, *older brother*, since the family words. Two things happen to it here, and they are worth separating.

The first is who it is for. In Kerala the sibling words are used well outside the family: a shopkeeper, a driver, somebody a little older than you in a queue. **You address a stranger as kin**, and doing so is ordinary politeness rather than a familiarity you have to earn. English has nothing that works this way — *excuse me* is the nearest thing and it names no relationship at all.

Grammar Lens: the calling form

The second is the ending. You do not call somebody with the same shape you use to talk *about* them:

ചേട്ടൻ <i>cēṭṭan</i>	an older brother — the word for him
ചേട്ടാ <i>cēṭṭā</i>	<i>brother!</i> — the word to him

A word ending in -ൻ swaps that ending for -ാ when you call somebody with it. That is the whole rule, and it reaches every such word you own: the one for a younger brother does the same thing, and so does the word for a teacher.

Malayalam keeps a separate shape for being spoken *to*, where English changes nothing at all and relies on tone of voice.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *cēṭṭan*, then *cēṭṭā*
- which of the two you would use to get somebody's attention
- what happened to the ending
- the same change on the word for a younger brother

Before you move on

What does *cēṭṭā* do? (**Calls out to a man you do not know.**)
Which ending does it replace? (**-ൻ.**) And does the man have to be your brother? (**No — you call a stranger by the family word.**)

82.2 ചേച്ചി (cēcci) — excuse me, sister

Say the calling form for a man you do not know, and say which ending it replaced.

Grammar Lens: the ending that has nothing to change

ചേച്ചി — *cēcci* — the way you call out to a woman you do not know. The move is the same one: **the word for an older sister, used for a stranger**. A shopkeeper, somebody at the next desk, a woman a little older than you. It is the partner of the word you learned a moment ago and it covers the same ground.

What is different is that **this one does not change shape**.

	for him / her	calling
older brother	ചേട്ടൻ	ചേട്ടാ
older sister	ചേച്ചി	ചേച്ചി

The *-ഃ* ending from the lesson before replaces *-ൻ*, and *cēcci* has no *-ൻ* to replace. So it is called as it stands, usually with the last sound drawn out a little, which is a matter of voice rather than of spelling.

A rule that applies to one word of a pair and not the other is normal, and it is worth getting used to early. Nothing is broken here: this word carries no *-ൻ* for the ending to take.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *cēcci*
- *cēttā*, then *cēcci*
- which of the two changed its ending, and why the other did not

Before you move on

How do you call out to a woman you do not know? (*cēcci*.) Does it take the calling ending? (No — it has no *-ൻ* to replace.)

82.3 which greeting, and when — five you own, one rule you do not

Say the greeting you learned first, then the one for the morning.

Grammar Lens: the rule nobody told you

You own **five** greetings and no rule for choosing. A learner who picks wrong is not misunderstood — they sound like a radio announcer greeting a neighbour.

greeting	reach
നമസ്കാരം <i>namaskāram</i>	anyone, any hour
സുപ്രഭാതം <i>suprabhātam</i>	the morning, formal or not
ശുഭ മധ്യാഹ്നം <i>śubha madhyāhnam</i>	the afternoon, formal
ശുഭ സായാഹ്നം <i>śubha sāyāhnam</i>	the evening, formal
ശുഭ രാത്രി <i>śubha rātri</i>	the night, formal

നമസ്കാരം is the one to reach for. It is tied to no hour and no occasion, it is respectful without being stiff, and it is never wrong. If you remember one line from this page, that is the line.

The ശുഭ family is written and announced more than it is spoken. These are the greetings of a notice, a broadcast, a speech, the opening of an email — you will read and hear them constantly, and say them rarely.

സുപ്രഭാതം is the exception inside its own family. It is built on a different piece of Sanskrit than its neighbours and has ended up as the ordinary morning greeting rather than the ceremonial one. **Say it to anybody before noon.**

So the working version is two lines:

- Any time, anyone → നമസ്കാരം.
- Before noon, if you like → സുപ്രഭാതം.

And the others are for reading.

What you've built

Nothing new, and something you were missing.

This lesson taught no word. All five were already yours; what was missing was the thing a phrasebook never prints — **which of them a person actually says.**

Put it with the calling words and you can start a conversation from nothing: നമസ്കാരം, ചേട്ടാ.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- the greeting that works at any hour with anyone
- what you would greet a neighbour with at nine in the morning
- which of the five you are most likely to READ rather than say
- *namaskāraṁ*, *cēṭṭā*

Before you move on

Which greeting is never wrong? (*namaskāraṁ*.) Which family is mostly written and announced? (**The ശുഭ one.**) And which member of that family is an everyday word anyway? (*suprabhātāṁ*.)

82.4 (opening a conversation) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Call out to a man you do not know, then to a woman you do not know.

Grammar Lens: two things a stranger needs

	about them	to them
older brother	ചേട്ടൻ	ചേട്ടാ
older sister	ചേച്ചി	ചേച്ചി

A word ending in -ൻ swaps it for -ാ when you call somebody, and a word with no -ൻ has nothing to swap, so it stands as it is.

Neither of these is a stranger-word that Malayalam keeps in reserve.

They are the family words, used outward: you address somebody you have never met as an older brother or an older sister, and that is ordinary politeness rather than a familiarity you have to earn. English has no equivalent — *excuse me* names no relationship at all.

What you've built

An opening line, which is the one thing a learner needs first and usually gets last.

നമസ്കാരം, ചേട്ടാ.

Two pieces, and **one of them was free** — the greeting was learned in the very first chapter, and this chapter only said **when to use it**: any hour, anyone, never wrong. The four ceremonial greetings are for reading, and the morning one is the exception you can say to anybody. **Knowing a word and knowing when it is used are two different pieces of knowledge.** A book that gives the first and not the second has given you half, and this chapter went back for the other half rather than adding more words.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *cēṭṭā*, then *cēcci*
- which of the two changed its ending, and what it changed from
- the greeting that is never wrong
- *namaskāraṁ*, *cēṭṭā*
- *namaskāraṁ*, *cēcci*

Before you move on

Which ending does the calling form replace? (-ൻ, with -ൻ.)
Whose words are you using when you address a stranger? (**The family's.**) And which greeting can you always fall back on? (*namaskāraṁ*.)

Chapter 83

Where You Came From

Modes: 🗣️ voice (3) 👁️ eyes (1) 🖱️ Hands-free start: first 3 of 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can ask where somebody is from and answer with any place I know.

From cold: the from-word and what must precede it, the question it builds at no cost, and what a noun ending in -am does before any ending.

83.1 നിന്ന് (ninnŭ) — from

Say the ending that means **in** or **at**. Then say the word for a town, and put that ending on it.

Grammar Lens: from is built on in

You can already say that something is **in** a place. This is how you say it comes **out of** one, and the useful part is that **you do not throw the old ending away**.

ഉരിൽ <i>uril</i>	in the town
ഉരിൽ നിന്ന് <i>uril ninnŭ</i>	from the town

നിന്ന് goes after the word that already carries the in-ending.

So *from* is not a new ending competing with the old one — it is a second step **on top of** it, and the sense follows the shape: *in the town* first, then *out of that*.

One thing is different from every ending you have met. The endings

glue on: *ūr* plus *-il* is one written word. **നിന്ന്** is a word of its own, standing after it. It began life as a form of a verb meaning *to stand* — *having stood in the town* — and hardened into the ordinary way to say *from*. That history is why it behaves like a word and not like a suffix.

What you've built

A direction, on top of a position.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *ūril*
- *ūril ninnŭ*
- which of the two is a position and which is a direction
- what has to already be on the word before *ninnŭ* can follow it

Before you move on

What does *ninnŭ* mean? (**From.**) What must come before it? (**The in-ending.**) And is it glued on or standing apart? (**Standing apart.**)

83.2 എവിടെ നിന്ന് (*evite ninnŭ*) — where from?

Say the word that asks **where**. Then say the word that means **from**.

You'll want to know: എവിടെ നിന്ന്

എവിടെ നിന്ന്? — *evite ninnŭ*? — where from?

Put the two together in the order the last lesson gave you and the question builds itself. എവിടെ already asks about a place you are **at**; നിന്ന് turns that into a place you came **out of**.

എവിടെ?

where?

എവിടെ നിന്ന്?

where **from**?

Nothing new is memorised here. **The question is two words you own, in the order the last lesson gave you**, and that is worth noticing in its own right: a well-built system spends its second question for free.

Answer it with any place you have:

ഊരിൽ നിന്ന് — *ūril ninnŭ* — from the town.

What you've built

Both sides of an exchange, from one rule.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *evite*, then *evite ninnŭ*
- what the second word did to the first
- *ūril ninnŭ*
- the question, then your own answer to it

Before you move on

How do you ask *where from?* (*evite ninnŭ*.) How many new words did that cost you? (**None** — both were already yours.)

83.3 കേരളത്തിൽ (*kēraḷattil*) — what -ം does before an ending

Say the name of the state and the name of the country. Then say the ending that means **in**.

Grammar Lens: two of your place names behave differently

Put the in-ending on both names you learned and only one of them goes quietly.

	in it
ഇന്ത്യ	ഇന്ത്യയിൽ <i>indyayil</i>
കേരളം	കേരളത്തിൽ <i>kēraḷattil</i>
ഇന്ത്യ ends in അ and takes a -യ- to join, the same join <i>kocciyil</i> uses.	

Nothing surprising. Which letter joins depends on which vowel the word ends in; അ takes this one.

കേരളം does something else. **The -ം is gone and -ത്ത- has arrived in its place**, and only then does the ending follow.

That is not this word being difficult. **Every noun ending in -ം does it**, and this book has taught you a pile of them:

in it	
പുസ്തകം <i>pustakam</i>	പുസ്തകത്തിൽ <i>pustakattil</i>
കേരളം <i>kēraḷam</i>	കേരളത്തിൽ <i>kēraḷattil</i>

So this is **a class, not an exception**, and it is a large one. Learning it once puts every -ം word you own into the in-form, which is a much better return than memorising two place names.

The -ം is a citation dress. It is what the word wears when it stands alone and is named; the moment **a case ending** is added, the word changes into its working shape first. Look for that habit rather than for a list.

Other kinds of ending do other things to it. You have met one already: the *and* ending puts വും there instead — വെള്ളം, വെള്ളവും — which is not this at all. What this chapter shows you is the case ending.

Now the whole chapter arrives at once:

കേരളത്തിൽ നിന്ന് — *kēraḷattil ninnŭ* — **from Kerala.**

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *indyayil*, then *kēraḷattil*
- which of the two changed more, and what happened to its ending
- *pustakattil*
- *kēraḷattil ninnŭ*

Before you move on

What happens to -ം when a case ending is added? (**It is replaced by -ത്ത-**.) Is that one word's quirk or a whole class? (**A whole class.**) And how do you say *from Kerala*? (*kēraḷattil ninnŭ*.)

83.4 (where you came from) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Ask *where from*, then say what each of its two words was doing.

Grammar Lens: one position, one direction, one change of shape

	in it	from it
ഊർ	ഊരിൽ	ഊരിൽ നിന്ന്
ഇന്ത്യ	ഇന്ത്യയിൽ	ഇന്ത്യയിൽ നിന്ന്
കേരളം	കേരളത്തിൽ	കേരളത്തിൽ നിന്ന്

Read the middle column and then the last. **നിന്ന് never changes and never glues on** — it follows a word that already carries the in-ending, and it does the same thing to all three.

Read the first column against the middle and the third row is the odd one. **കേരളം loses its -ം and puts -ത്ത- there instead**, and so does every other -ം word this book has given you. **The -ം is a citation dress**: what the word wears standing alone, dropped the moment **a case ending** is added.

What you've built

An answer to the first question anybody asks you.

Two chapters ago the place words arrived and the question was still unaskable. Now both halves exist, and **neither the question nor most of the answer cost a new word**: *evite ninnũ* is two words you owned, and the in-form of every -ം noun came out of a single rule rather than a list.

That is the shape worth carrying: **when the endings are regular, the work is in knowing which shape a word takes before an ending, not in learning more endings.**

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *evite ninnũ?*
- *uril ninnũ*

- *indyayil ninnŭ*
- *kēraḷattil ninnŭ*
- which of those three changed its shape before the ending, and what it changed

Before you move on

What must a word carry before *ninnŭ*? (**The in-ending.**) What replaces -ഓ before an ending? (-ഓ-.) And how do you say *from Kerala*? (*kēraḷattil ninnŭ.*)

Chapter 84

Where A Thing Is

Modes: ⇨ voice (3) 👁 eyes (1) ⇨ Hands-free start: first 3 of 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say that something is on, under, in front of or behind something else.

From cold: all four place-words, the owner-ending the noun in front of them must carry, and the in-ending visible inside three of the four.

84.1 മുകളിൽ (mukaḷil) — on top of

Say the word for a chair. Then put the owner-ending on it — the one അമ്മ took.

Grammar Lens: the owner-ending comes first

മുകളിൽ — *mukaḷil* — on top of, above.

The track has given you a chair, a book and several other things in a room, and **no way to say where any of them is**. This is the first of four words that fix that, and the rule they all share is worth more than any one of them.

The thing you are measuring from goes into the owner-form, and the place-word follows it.

കസേരയുടെ മുകളിൽ — *kasērayuṭe mukaḷil* — on top of the chair.

Read it literally and the logic is plain: **the chair's top-part**.

Malayalam is not saying *on* the chair; it is naming a part that belongs to the chair and putting you there. That is why the owner-ending is needed — without it the two words are not connected at all.

കസേരയുടെ	the chair's
കസേരയുടെ മുകളിൽ	on top of the chair

So this costs you no new grammar either. **The owner-ending is the one from the genitive chapter, unchanged:** കസേര takes -യുടെ, the same way അമ്മ did there.

Put a thing in front and you have a sentence's worth:

പുസ്തകം കസേരയുടെ മുകളിൽ — the book is on top of the chair.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *mukalil*
- *kasērayuṭe mukalil*
- what the chair had to take before the place-word could follow
- *pustakam kasērayuṭe mukalil*

Before you move on

What does *mukalil* mean? (**On top of.**) What must the noun before it carry? (**The owner-ending.**) And what is *kasērayuṭe mukalil* literally? (**The chair's top-part.**)

84.2 താഴെ (tāle) — below

Say *on top of the chair*, and say what the chair had to take first.

You'll want to know: താഴെ

താഴെ — *tāle* — below, under, down.

It is the opposite of the word before it, and **it takes exactly the same shape around it:**

കസേരയുടെ മുകളിൽ	on top of the chair
കസേരയുടെ താഴെ	under the chair

The owner-ending does not change and the order does not change. **Only the place-word swaps**, which is the whole point of learning the pattern before the words: each new one after this costs a word and nothing else.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *tāle*
- *kasērayuṭe tāle*
- *kasērayuṭe mukalil*, then *kasērayuṭe tāle*
- what changed between those two, and what did not

Before you move on

What does *tāle* mean? (**Below, under.**) Does the noun in front of it behave any differently? (**No — the same owner-ending.**)

84.3 മുനിൽ പിന്നിൽ (munnil, pinnil) — in front of, behind

Say *on top of* and *below*. You have the up-and-down pair; these two are the other axis.

You'll want to know: മുനിൽ, പിന്നിൽ

മുനിൽ — *munnil* — in front of.

പിന്നിൽ — *pinnil* — behind.

Both go where the other two went, after a noun carrying the owner-ending, and the set is now closed:

മുകളിൽ	on top of
താഴെ	below
മുനിൽ	in front of
പിന്നിൽ	behind

കസേരയുടെ മുനിൽ — in front of the chair. കസേരയുടെ പിന്നിൽ — behind the chair.

The two new ones are a near-pair on the page as well as in meaning: *munnil* and *pinnil* differ in their **first** sound and agree in everything after it. Say them one after the other until the opening is what you hear, because that opening is the only thing carrying the difference.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *munnil*, then *pinnil*
- which sound is the only difference between them
- *kasērayuṭe munnil*
- *kasērayuṭe pinnil*

Before you move on

Which one means *in front of*? (***munnil***.) Which means *behind*? (***pinnil***.) And how many place-words do you now own? (**Four**.)

84.4 (where a thing is) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say all four place-words, up and down first, then front and back.

Grammar Lens: one shape, four fillers

കസേരയുടെ മുകളിൽ	on top of the chair
കസേരയുടെ താഴെ	under the chair
കസേരയുടെ മുന്നിൽ	in front of the chair
കസേരയുടെ പിന്നിൽ	behind the chair

Read the first column downward. **Only the last word ever changes.**

The noun takes the owner-ending and stays put, and each new place-word costs a word and nothing else — which is why the chapter spent its first lesson on the shape rather than on the vocabulary. And the owner-ending is not new either. It is the one from the genitive chapter, picking its form by the last sound of the noun exactly as it did

there, because കസേരയുടെ മുകളിൽ is literally *the chair's top-part*. Malayalam does not say *on* the chair — it names a part that belongs to the chair and puts you in it.

Why it's said this way

Look at the ends of the four words themselves.

മുകളിൽ, മുന്നിൽ and പിന്നിൽ all finish in -ിൽ — the in-ending you have had since the first verbs. These are not really postpositions at all in origin: they are **part-words already sitting in the in-form**, which is why *the chair's top-part* reads the way it does. താഴെ **does not**. It ends in -െ and it means the same kind of thing. So the pattern is real and **it covers three of the four**. That is worth stating plainly rather than tidying away: a pattern that explains most of a set is still useful, and the reader who notices the exception has read correctly rather than made a mistake. **Learn the shape from the three, and learn താഴെ as it stands.**

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- all four place-words in a row
- *kasērayuṭe mukaḷil*, then swap the last word three times
- *pustakam kasērayuṭe mukaḷil*
- which three of the four end in the in-ending, and which one does not

Before you move on

What does the noun before a place-word carry? (**The owner-ending**.) Which of the four does not end in the in-ending? (*tāle*.) And what changes when you swap one place-word for another? (**Nothing else**.)

Chapter 85

Held Sounds

Modes: ⇐ voice (3) 👁 eyes (1) ⇐ Hands-free start: none of the 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can hear and say the difference a doubled consonant makes, and I know that Malayalam never uses stress to tell two words apart.

From cold: the new verb, the held consonant that turns one word into another, how the doubling is written, and where the weight falls.

85.1 കുടിക്കുക (kuṭikkuka) — to drink

Say *tea*. Say *water*. Then notice what you have never been able to say about either of them.

You'll want to know: കുടിക്കുക

കുടിക്കുക — *kuṭikkuka* — to drink.

This book has given you **water, tea, coffee and milk** and no verb to do anything with them. That is the gap this closes, and it closes for all four at once.

It is built the way the verbs you already own are built — the **-ക്കുക** ending you met with *to take*, sitting on a stem:

എടുക്കുക	to take
കുടിക്കുക	to drink

Same ending, different stem. **The stem is what you will meet again**, because everything Malayalam later does to this verb happens to the front of it and leaves the ending behind.

Say കുടി — *kuṭi* — on its own and look at it. Two letters, and they are the whole of what makes this verb *drinking* rather than *taking*. **The next lesson is about those two letters**, because one small change to them produces a word you have known since the family chapter.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *kuṭikkuka*
- *eṭukkuka*, then *kuṭikkuka*, and say which part the two share
- the stem of the new one on its own
- the four things in this book you can now drink

Before you move on

What is *kuṭikkuka*? (**To drink.**) Which ending does it share with *to take*? (-ക്കുക.) And what is its stem? (*kuṭi*.)

85.2 the held consonant — a doubled letter is a longer sound

Say the stem of the verb from the lesson before. Then say the word for a child.

Grammar Lens: hold it, and it is a different word

Put those two side by side:

കുടി	<i>kuṭi</i>	drinking — the stem of the verb
കുട്ടി	<i>kuṭṭi</i>	a child

One consonant, held longer. Nothing else about the two words differs — same first letter, same last letter, same vowels. **The length of the S is carrying the whole difference in meaning**, and an English speaker will not hear it without being told to listen for it, because English does not use consonant length this way at all.

So a doubled letter is **not a spelling convention**. It is an instruction: **stop on that sound and hold it before you let go**. Say *kuṭi* and your tongue touches once and moves on. Say *kuṭṭi* and it stays there — briefly, but audibly — before the *i*. You have been reading this instruction for a long time without it being named. **Around a hundred of the words this book has taught you carry a held consonant** — *amma*, *illa*, *uppū*, *ucca*, *aṭuttū* — and you have been producing them correctly by imitation. Naming it means you can now produce a word you have only seen written.

Why it's said this way

The script writes it exactly as it sounds: **the consonant, the mark that strips its vowel, then the consonant again**. That mark is the one you were taught for killing a vowel. Here it is doing the same job for a different reason — **the first S has no vowel of its own because it is only the held front half of a single long sound**, not a separate syllable. *ഇല്ല* is the same shape with a different letter, and you have said it since the first chapter.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *kuṭi*, touching the sound once
- *kuṭṭi*, holding it
- the pair one after the other until you hear the difference
- which of the two means a child
- *amma* and *illa*, and say where the held sound is in each

Before you move on

What does a doubled letter tell you to do? (**Hold the sound.**) Can holding it change the word? (**Yes — *kuṭi* and *kuṭṭi*.**) And how is the doubling written? (**The letter, the vowel-killing mark, the letter again.**)

85.3 where the weight falls — stress, and why it matters less here

Say the held-consonant pair from the last lesson once more, and say what was doing the work in it.

Grammar Lens: the first syllable, and nothing riding on it

Malayalam puts its weight on the first syllable of a word, and that is nearly the whole rule. There is no list to learn and no marks to read, which is already unlike English.

That is not the valuable part, though. **What matters is how little the weight is doing.**

English uses stress to tell words apart. Move the weight in *record* and you get a different word — a noun or a verb, from the same letters.

Malayalam never does this. No two Malayalam words differ only in where the weight falls, so a learner who puts it in the wrong place is **accented, not misunderstood.**

That is a genuine relief, and it is also a warning, because it means **the effort English taught you to spend on stress is better spent somewhere else.**

language	what carries a difference in meaning
English	where the weight falls
Malayalam	how long a sound is held

The last lesson is that second row. കൂടി and കൂട്ടി are not a stress pair — the weight sits on the first syllable in both. They differ because one consonant is **held**, and that is the contrast this language actually spends.

So if you are going to listen hard for one thing, **listen for length, not for emphasis.** Length is where Malayalam keeps its meanings, and an English ear arrives trained on the wrong one.

What you've built

A rule you can stop thinking about, and a reason to think harder about another.

Say നമസ്കാരം with the weight at the front. Say it again with the weight in the middle. **Both are the same word**, and the first is what

a speaker sounds like.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *namaskārami* with the weight on its first syllable
- which syllable of any Malayalam word takes the weight
- what happens if you put it somewhere else — understood, or not?
- *kuṭi* and *kutṭi*, and say what separates them instead

Before you move on

Which syllable carries the weight? (**The first.**) Do two Malayalam words ever differ only by it? (**No.**) And what should an English ear listen for instead? (**How long a sound is held.**)

85.4 (held sounds) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say *to drink*, and name something in this book you could drink.

Grammar Lens: one held sound, one whole meaning

കുടി	<i>kuṭi</i>	drinking — the stem of the new verb
കുട്ടി	<i>kutṭi</i>	a child

Same letters at either end, same vowels, **one consonant held**. That is the entire difference, and it is the whole meaning.

A doubled letter is an instruction: **stop on that sound and hold it before you let go**. It is written the way it sounds — the letter, the vowel-killing mark, the letter again — because the first half genuinely has no vowel of its own.

You have been obeying that instruction for a hundred words — *amma*, *illa*, *uppu* — by imitation. Naming it means you can now say a word you have only ever seen written.

What you've built

An ear pointed at the right thing.

Malayalam puts its weight on the first syllable, and no two of its words are told apart by where that weight sits. Put it in the wrong place and you are accented, not misunderstood. English spends stress on meaning; **Malayalam spends length.**

language

what carries a difference in meaning

English

where the weight falls

Malayalam

how long a sound is held

So the chapter's real instruction is about where to aim attention: **an English ear arrives trained on the wrong feature**, and the fix is to stop listening for emphasis and start listening for length.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *kuṭikkuka*
- *kuṭi*, then *kuṭṭi*
- which one means a child, and what makes it so
- which syllable of a Malayalam word carries the weight
- which of the two features an English ear should retrain onto

Before you move on

What is *kuṭikkuka*? (**To drink.**) What does a doubled letter tell you? (**Hold the sound.**) And does moving the weight ever change a Malayalam word? (**No.**)

Chapter 86

Two Kinds Of With

Modes: ⇐ voice (2) ◉ eyes (2) ⇐ Hands-free start: first 2 of 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say who came along with me and what I did something with, and I know those are different relationships in Malayalam.

From cold: both company words and their register split, the instrument ending, and the question English never makes a speaker ask.

86.1 ഒപ്പം (oppam) — together with

Say *on top of the chair*, and say what the chair had to carry first. Then say *my*.

You'll want to know: ഒപ്പം

ഒപ്പം — *oppam* — together with.

You have been able to place a **thing** since the place-words. This places a **person**, and it does it in the slot you already know:

എന്റെ ഒപ്പം — *enre oppam* — with me.

Look at what that is. എന്റെ is the owner-form you have had since almost the beginning, and ഒപ്പം follows it exactly as മുകളിൽ followed *the chair's*. Same shape, same order, nothing new to arrange:

കസേരയുടെ മുകളിൽ

on top of the chair

എന്റെ ഒപ്പം

together with me

The slot does not care whether what follows it is a **position** or a **company**. That is a good deal of reach from one arrangement, and it is the reason the place-words chapter spent itself on the pattern.

Now put a person in it who is not you. സുഹൃത്തു് ends in a consonant, so its owner-form takes the ending consonants take:

സുഹൃത്തിന്റെ ഒപ്പം — *suhṛtthinre oppam* — together with a friend.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *oppam*
- *enre oppam*
- which earlier word *oppam* is standing in the place of
- *suhṛtthinre oppam*

Before you move on

What does *oppam* mean? (**Together with.**) What must the word in front of it carry? (**The owner-ending.**) And where have you seen that arrangement before? (**With the place-words.**)

86.2 കൂടെ (kūṭe) — with, alongside

Say *with me*, and say what came before the new word in it.

You'll want to know: കൂടെ

കൂടെ — *kūṭe* — with, alongside.

It goes exactly where *oppam* goes and means the same thing:

എന്റെ കൂടെ — *enre kūṭe* — with me.

So why two? **You have met this arrangement before.** When the degree words arrived, one of them belonged to the page and the other to the room, and the difference was register rather than meaning. This is the same split:

ഒപ്പം <i>oppam</i>	the more formal of the two — writing, and careful speech
കൂടെ <i>kūṭe</i>	the everyday one you will hear far more often

Neither is wrong anywhere. **A learner who owns only one will be understood, and a learner who owns both will place themselves correctly**, which is the same return the degree pair paid.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *kūṭe*
- *enre kūṭe*
- *enre oppam*, then *enre kūṭe*, and say which you would write
- the earlier pair that split the same way

Before you move on

What does *kūṭe* mean? (**With, alongside.**) Which of the two is the everyday one? (***kūṭe*.**) And does the word in front of it change? (**No — the owner-ending either way.**)

86.3 കത്തിയാൽ (*kattiyāl*) — by means of

Say *if he comes*, and say which ending made it *if*. Then say the word for a knife.

Grammar Lens: the same ending on a different kind of word

ആൽ is an ending you already own. On a **verb** it means *if*.
Put it on a noun instead and it means *by means of*.
കത്തിയാൽ — *kattiyāl* — by means of a knife, with a knife.

what it lands on	what it does
a verb — <i>vannāl</i>	if he comes
a noun — <i>kattiyāl</i>	by means of a knife

The ending has not changed and the meanings are not related. What decides is the kind of word underneath it, and a reader who knows that will never have to choose between the two readings — the word in front already chose.

This is worth meeting on purpose rather than by surprise. **One ending doing two unrelated jobs is ordinary in this language,** and the habit it should build is to look at the host before reading the ending.

Why it's said this way

English hides a distinction here that Malayalam marks. *I went with a friend* and *I cut it with a knife* use the same English word, and **they are not the same relationship at all**: one is company, the other is a tool.

company — a person who came along ഒപ്പം, after the owner-form

instrument — a thing you used -ആൽ, glued onto the noun

So the question to ask is never *how do I say “with”*. It is **which kind of with this is** — and once you ask that, the two never compete.

-ആൽ belongs more to writing than to talk. You will read it more often than you say it, which is a good reason to recognise it and no reason to avoid it.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *kattiyāl*
- *vannāl*, then *kattiyāl*, and say what kind of word each ending sat on
- which of the two “with”s a friend takes, and which a knife takes
- which of the two you are more likely to read than to say

Before you move on

What does **-ആൽ** mean on a noun? (**By means of.**) What does it mean on a verb? (**If.**) And what tells you which reading to take?

(The kind of word it is sitting on.)

86.4 (two kinds of with) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say *with me* twice, once with each of the two words.

Grammar Lens: English asks one question, Malayalam asks two

*I went **with** a friend. I cut it **with** a knife. One English word, two relationships that have nothing in common — a companion and a tool.*

company	എന്റെ ഒപ്പം /	after the owner-form,
	എന്റെ കൂടെ	standing apart
instrument	കത്തിയാൽ	glued onto the noun

So the useful question is never *how do I say with*. It is **which kind of with this is**. Ask that and the two never compete; skip it and you will pick by coin-toss.

The company pair splits by register the way the degree words did — ഒപ്പം to the page, കൂടെ to the room — and both sit in the slot the place-words established, after the owner-ending and unchanged.

What you've built

A distinction your own language does not draw for you.

And a second look at an ending you thought you had finished with. ആൽ on a **verb** is *if*; on a **noun** it is *by means of*. The ending is identical and the meanings are unrelated — **what decides is the kind of word underneath it**.

That is the habit worth taking away: **look at the host before you read the ending**. It will keep paying, because one ending doing two unrelated jobs is ordinary here rather than exceptional.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *enre oppam*, then *enre kūṭe*

- *suhṛtthinre kūṭe*
- *kattiyāl*
- which of the three is a tool and which are companions
- what decides whether ആൽ means *if* or *by*

Before you move on

Which word do you use for a person who came along? (*oppam* or *kūṭe*.) Which ending marks a tool? (-ആൽ.) And what question should you ask before translating *with*? (**Which kind of *with* is this.**)

Chapter 87

Who It Happens To

Modes: ⇄ voice (1) 👁 eyes (3) ⇄ Hands-free start: none of the 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say who a verb happens to, and I know which objects take the ending and which do not.

From cold: the object ending, the rule that it is about what kind of thing the object is rather than about being the object, and why there is no separate object pronoun to learn.

87.1 അധ്യാപകനെ (adhyāpakane) — who it happens to

Say the word for a teacher. Say the verb *to see*. Now try to put them together and notice that you have never been shown how.

Grammar Lens: an ending for the one it is done to

Every case ending you own so far has placed a noun somewhere — **in** a place, **from** a place, **owning** something, **with** somebody. This one does something different. **It marks the person a verb happens to.** -എ goes on the end, exactly as the others did:

അധ്യാപകൻ	a teacher — the one doing
അധ്യാപകനെ	the teacher — the one it is done to

ഞാൻ അധ്യാപകനെ കാണുന്നു — *ñān adhyāpakane kāṇunnu* — I see the teacher.

Read the shape rather than the English. **The doer wears nothing; the one it happens to wears -എ.** English does that job with word order alone — *I see the teacher* and *the teacher sees me* use the same two words and differ only in which came first — and Malayalam marks it on the word itself.

That is worth more than it looks. **A marked object does not depend on where it stands**, so the ending is doing work that English has to spend its word order on.

Note what happened to the last letter: അധ്യാപകൻ ends in the standalone ണ, and before the ending it becomes a plain ന. A chillu is a consonant with its vowel stripped away, so **it cannot carry one** — and -എ brings a vowel, so the full letter has to come back.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *adhyāpakan*, then *adhyāpakane*
- which of the two is the one being seen
- *ñān adhyāpakane kāṇunnu*
- what happened to the last letter when the ending arrived

Before you move on

What does -എ mark? (**The one a verb happens to.**) Does the doer take an ending? (**No.**) And what does English use instead? (**Word order.**)

87.2 പുസ്തകം വായിക്കുന്നു — the ending a book does not take

Say *I see the teacher*, and say which word carried the ending. Then say the word for a book.

Grammar Lens: what kind of thing the object is

You might expect every object to take the ending. **It does not work that way.**

ഞാൻ കുട്ടിയെ കാണുന്നു	I see the child — ending
ഞാൻ പുസ്തകം വായിക്കുന്നു	I read the book — no ending

Both are objects. Both come before the verb. **One is a person and the other is a thing, and that is the whole of it.**

A living thing being acted on takes -എ. A lifeless thing ordinarily does not. So the question the language asks before marking an object is not *is this the object* but **what kind of thing is this** — and no European language the reader is likely to know asks it in quite that way.

Look at what the ending does to each noun:

കുട്ടി → കുട്ടിയെ	a -യ- joins, because the word ends in ഇ
അധ്യാപകൻ → അധ്യാപകനെ	the final chillu opens back into a plain consonant

The joining rule is the one you already know. It is the same choice the owner-ending made, decided by the same thing — **the last sound of the noun** — so there is nothing new to learn about attaching it.

Now a verb that only takes people: സഹായിക്കുക, to help. You cannot help a book, so its object is **always** marked.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *kuttiye*
- *ñān kuttiye kāṇunnu*
- *ñān pustakam vāyikkunnu*, and say why the book has no ending
- which kind of object carries the ending, and why

Before you move on

Which objects take -എ? (**Living ones.**) Which ordinarily do not? (**Lifeless ones.**) And what decides how the ending attaches? (**The last sound of the noun.**)

87.3 അവനെ (avane) — him, as an object

Say *he*. Then say the ending that marks the one a verb happens to.

You'll want to know: അവനെ

അവനെ — *avane* — him, when he is the one it happens to.

There is nothing new in it. അവൻ takes the same ending a teacher takes, and it changes in the same way — the standaloneൻ opening back into a plain ന:

അധ്യാപകൻ → അധ്യാപകനെ	the teacher
അവൻ → അവനെ	him

ഞാൻ അവനെ കാണുന്നു — *ñān avane kāṇunnu* — I see him.

Why it's said this way

This is where the reader's own language is likely to mislead them. English turns *he* into **him** — a different word you have to remember. Spanish goes further and shrinks the object into a small unstressed piece that leans on the verb and moves around the sentence.

Malayalam does neither. The pronoun keeps its whole shape and takes the ordinary ending, **exactly like any other person-word**. There is no separate object pronoun to learn and no small particle to place.

So the list of things you have to memorise here is **empty**. If you can put the ending on *teacher*, you can put it on *him*, and on any person-word this book gives you later.

That is the general shape of this language worth carrying: **where a European language keeps a special form, Malayalam usually keeps the ordinary word and adds the ordinary ending.**

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *avan*, then *avane*
- *ñān avane kāṇunnu*
- what you had to memorise to make the object form
- the same change on the word for a teacher

Before you move on

How do you say *him* as an object? (*avane*.) Is it a separate word to learn? (**No — the ordinary pronoun with the ordinary ending.**)

87.4 (who it happens to) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say *I see the teacher*, and say which word carries the ending.

Grammar Lens: the doer wears nothing, the done-to wears -എ

	takes -എ?
അധ്യാപകനെ — the teacher	yes — a person
കുട്ടിയെ — the child	yes — a person
അവനെ — him	yes — a person
പുസ്തകം — the book	no — a thing

Being the object is not what decides it. What decides it is the kind of thing the object is. A living thing being acted on takes the ending; a lifeless one ordinarily does not — a question no European language the reader is likely to know asks in quite that way. How it attaches is nothing new: **a word ending in ഇ or അ takes a -യ- to join, and a word ending in the standalone റ്റ opens it back into a plain ന.** The same last sound that decided the owner-ending decides this one.

What you've built

A sentence that does not depend on word order to say who did what. English separates *I see the teacher* from *the teacher sees me* **only by which word came first**. Malayalam marks it on the word, so the marking survives wherever the word stands.

And the pronoun cost nothing. English keeps a second form — *he* becomes **him** — and Spanish shrinks the object into a small piece that leans on the verb. **Malayalam keeps the ordinary word and adds the ordinary ending**, so there is no separate object pronoun to learn at all.

Where a European language keeps a special form, Malayalam usually keeps the ordinary word and adds the ordinary ending. That has now been true of the owner-ending, the place-words, the company words and this.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *adhyāpakane, kuṭṭiye, avane*
- *ñān avane kāṇunnu*
- *ñān pustakani vāyikkunnu*, and say why the book is bare
- what decides whether an object takes the ending
- what English uses instead of the ending

Before you move on

What does **-ആ** mark? (**The one a verb happens to.**) Which objects take it? (**Living ones.**) And is there a separate object pronoun to memorise? (**No.**)

Chapter 88

Counting Past Twenty

Modes: ⇐ voice (2) 👁 eyes (2) ⇐ Hands-free start: first 1 of 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can count in tens to a hundred and say any number between twenty and a hundred.

From cold: the six tens built on ten, the one built on a hundred instead, a hundred itself, and the stem change a ten makes before a digit.

88.1 മുപ്പത് — എൺപത് (muppatŭ — eṇpathŭ) — the tens

Say *twenty*, and say the two pieces it is built from. Then count from six to ten.

You'll want to know: the tens

Your counting has stopped at twenty since the numbers chapter. **It does not have to**, because ഇരുപത് already showed you how the tens are made: a digit in front, പത്ത് behind.

Every ten from here up is that same word with a different digit on it.

		built on
മുപ്പത് <i>muppatŭ</i>	30	three
നാൽപത് <i>nālpatŭ</i>	40	four
അമ്പത് <i>ampatŭ</i>	50	five
അറുപത് <i>arupatŭ</i>	60	six
എഴുപത് <i>elupatŭ</i>	70	seven
എൺപത് <i>enpathŭ</i>	80	eight

Read the middle of each word. **-പത്-** is in all of them, and it is the word for ten you have had since you learned to count.

Eighty begins with **എൺ-**. Its final **ൺ** is the vowel-free retroflex nasal you met near the beginning of the book, so the whole word is now yours to read.

Why it's said this way

The front of each word is the digit, **but not in the shape you learned it in**. These are older, shorter forms that survive only in compounds:

the digit alone

ആറ് *ārŭ* six
 ഏഴ് *ēlŭ* seven

inside the ten

അറു- in *arupatŭ*
 എഴു- in *elupatŭ*

Close enough to recognise, not close enough to predict. **അമ്പത്** has **worn furthest** — its connection to *five* is real and no longer visible on the page.

So this is a pattern to **read with**, not to **build with**. Six words to learn, and the pattern makes them variations of one word rather than six unrelated ones — which is most of the work done.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- the tens in order, thirty to eighty
- the piece all six share
- *arupatŭ*, then the digit it is built on
- which of the six no longer shows its digit

Before you move on

What is in the middle of every ten? (-പത്-, *ten*.) What is in front of it? (**The digit, in an older short form.**) And can you build a new one by guessing? (**No — read with the pattern, do not build with it.**)

88.2 തൊണ്ണൂറ് നൂറ് (tonṇūr̥, nūr̥) — ninety, and a hundred

Say the tens from the lesson before, and say the piece they all share.

You'll want to know: നൂറ്, and then തൊണ്ണൂറ്

നൂറ് — *nūr̥* — a hundred. A single word, owing nothing to *ten*.

Now the one that breaks the run:

തൊണ്ണൂറ് — *tonṇūr̥* — ninety.

There is no -പത്- in it. Every other ten was *digit plus ten*, and this one is not built that way at all.

Look at how it ends. **The word for a hundred, a line above, is sitting inside it** — *ton-* **nūr̥**. Ninety is named from **above**, as a hundred short of something, where the other tens are named from below as so many tens.

	built from
എൺപത് <i>enpath̥</i> 80	eight tens
തൊണ്ണൂറ് 90	a hundred , reduced
നൂറ് 100	itself

That is why the lesson gives you a hundred **first**. Learn *tonṇūr̥* after *nūr̥* and it is one irregular word with a visible reason; learn it before, and it is noise.

A run of regular forms tends to hold one member built on a different idea, and finding out which idea usually costs less than memorising the exception.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *nūrŭ*
- *tonṇūrŭ*
- which of the two you can hear inside the other
- *elupatŭ*, *tonṇūrŭ*, *nūrŭ* in order

Before you move on

What is *nūrŭ*? (**A hundred.**) Does ninety contain the word for ten? (**No — it contains the word for a hundred.**) And which is named from above rather than from below? (*tonṇūrŭ*.)

88.3 ഇരുപത്തിയൊന്ന് (*irupattiyonnŭ*) — twenty-one

Say *twenty*. Say *one*. Then say what you would have to do to put them together.

Grammar Lens: the ten changes shape before the digit

ഇരുപത്തിയൊന്ന് — *irupattiyonnŭ* — twenty-one.

The two halves are both yours. What is new is the join, and you have seen it before:

ഇരുപത്	twenty, standing alone
ഇരുപത്തി-	twenty, with something coming after it

The ten does not keep its standing-alone shape. It takes -ത്തി- and the digit follows. That should look familiar: കേരളം became കേരളത്തിൽ before its ending, by the same kind of change.

A word wears one shape alone and another before something else, and this language does it often enough that it is worth expecting rather than learning case by case. You have now met it on a place name and on a number.

The order is the plain one — **ten first, digit second**, exactly as English says *twenty-one* — so there is nothing to reverse in your head.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *irupatŭ*, then *irupattiyonnŭ*
- what happened to the ten when the digit arrived
- the earlier word that changed shape the same way before its ending
- which comes first in the compound, the ten or the digit

Before you move on

What does a ten do before a digit? (**Changes shape, taking -ത്തി-**.) Which comes first? (**The ten.**) And where have you seen that kind of stem change before? (**On കേരളം before its ending.**)

88.4 (counting past twenty) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Count the tens aloud from twenty as far as you can get.

Grammar Lens: six of one word, then two that are not

മുപ്പത്	30	digit + പത്ത്
നാൽപ്പത്	40	digit + പത്ത്
അമ്പത്	50	digit + പത്ത്, worn
അറുപത്	60	digit + പത്ത്
എഴുപത്	70	digit + പത്ത്
എൺപത്	80	digit + പത്ത്
തൊണ്ണൂറ്	90	നൂറ്, reduced
നൂറ്	100	itself

Read the table downward and the break is visible. **Six tens are one word with different digits on the front. Ninety is not a ten at all** — it carries the word for a hundred, and is named from **above** where the others are named from below.

The digits on the front are **older short forms**: *ārŭ* appears as അറു-, *ēlŭ* as എഴു-. Close enough to recognise, not close enough to predict — so **this is a pattern to read with, not to build with.**

What you've built

Everything between twenty and a hundred.

ഇരുപത്തിയൊന്ന് — twenty-one. The ten changes shape before the digit, taking -ത്തി-, and the digit follows in the plain order English also uses.

That stem change is the third thing in this book to do it. കേരളം became കേരളത്തിൽ before its ending; a ten does the same before a digit. **A word wears one shape alone and another before something else** — worth expecting from here on rather than learning case by case.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- the tens from thirty to eighty
- *tonnūrŭ*, and say which word is inside it
- *nūrŭ*
- *irupattiyonnŭ*, and say what the ten did
- which of the eight is not built on *ten*

Before you move on

What sits inside every ten from thirty to eighty? (-പത്-) What sits inside ninety instead? (നൂറ്, *a hundred*.) And what does a ten do before a digit? (**Takes** -ത്തി-.)

Chapter 89

What You Think Of It

Modes: 🗣️ voice (4) 🖐️ Hands-free start: all 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say that something is good or bad, and say that I think so.

From cold: the ending that lets a quality stand alone, the negative the book had been missing, and the opinion frame that needed no new grammar.

89.1 നല്ലത് (nallatŭ) — a good one

Say *good*. Then say where it has to stand, and what it needs after it.

Grammar Lens: a quality with nothing to lean on

നല്ല has always needed a noun to sit in front of. You can say *a good book* and you cannot say **the good one** — there is nothing for the quality to lean on.

-അത് fixes that. Put it on the end of a quality and the quality becomes a thing:

നല്ല
നല്ലത്

good — needs a noun after it
a good one, a good thing —
stands alone

And look at what that ending is. അത് is the word for *that*, which you have had since the pointing chapter. നല്ലത് is *the that-which-is-good*

— the sense fits the shape exactly.

This works on every quality the book has given you, and that is the reason it is worth a lesson rather than a footnote:

വലിയ → വലിയത്	a big one
ചെറിയ → ചെറിയത്	a small one
പുതിയ → പുതിയത്	a new one
പഴയ → പഴയത്	an old one

Five qualities, one ending, and **no exceptions among them.**

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *nalla*, then *nallatŭ*
- which of the two can stand without a noun after it
- the word for *that*, and where you can see it in *nallatŭ*
- *valiyatŭ*

Before you move on

What does **-അത്** do to a quality? (**Turns it into a thing.**) What ordinary word is that ending? (**that.**) And how many of your qualities does it work on? (**All of them.**)

89.2 മോശം (*mōśam*) — bad

Say *a good one*. Then notice what you still cannot say about anything at all.

You'll want to know: മോശം

മോശം — *mōśam* — bad, poor.

The book has given you five qualities and not one of them is **negative**. A thing could be good, big, small, new or old, and there was no way to say it was **bad** — which is half of every opinion anybody has ever offered.

Put it with the *is* word you have had since the second chapter:

മോശമാണ് — *mōśamāṇṣ* — it is bad.

Notice the join. മോശം ends in the ൾ, and when ആണ് follows it that ൾ is written മ. This may look a little like the stem changes you have seen before another piece, but it is not the same event: the sound and stem stay put, and only the writing changes so the final **m** can carry the vowel that follows.

The partner sentence is built the same way, from the word you learned a moment ago: നല്ലതാണ് — *nallatāṇṣ* — it is good.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *mōśam*
- *mōśamāṇṣ*
- what happened to the ൾ when the *is* word arrived
- *nallatāṇṣ*, then *mōśamāṇṣ*

Before you move on

What does *mōśam* mean? (**Bad.**) How do you say *it is bad*? (*mōśamāṇṣ*.) And how was the ൾ written once ആണ് followed? (മ.)

89.3 നല്ലതാണ് എന്ന് ഞാൻ ചിന്തിക്കുന്നു — I think it is good

Say *it is bad*. Then say the marker that turns any sentence into something you can report.

Grammar Lens: nothing new is needed

An opinion is **a sentence with your own judgement wrapped around it**, and you now have both halves.

അത് നല്ലതാണ് എന്ന് ഞാൻ ചിന്തിക്കുന്നു.

atṭ nallatāṇṣ enṇṭ ṇān cintikkunnu — **I think it is good.**

Take it apart and **every piece is already yours**:

piece	where it came from
അത് നല്ലതാണ്	this chapter — <i>it is good</i>
എന്ന്	the quoting marker
ഞാൻ ചിന്തിക്കുന്നു	the thinking verb, already paired with that marker

The quoting chapter did the hard part. It showed that the marker takes whatever sentence you can build and hands it to a verb of saying, thinking, knowing or asking — so an opinion needed **no new grammar at all**, only something worth having an opinion about.

Swap the inner sentence and the frame does not move:

അത് മോശമാണ് എന്ന് ഞാൻ ചിന്തിക്കുന്നു — I think it is bad.

This is what a well-built system looks like from the inside.

Two vocabulary words arrived, and a whole function — giving an opinion — came with them, because the machinery was already in place and waiting for something to carry.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *atŭ nallatāṇŭ*
- the whole opinion — *atŭ nallatāṇŭ ennŭ ñān cintikkunnu*
- the same sentence with *bad* instead
- which part of the opinion is new to this chapter

Before you move on

What wraps your judgement around a sentence? (**എന്ന് and a thinking verb.**) How much new grammar did the opinion need? (**None.**) And what changes when the opinion does? (**Only the inner sentence.**)

89.4 (what you think of it) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say *a good one*, then say *bad*.

Grammar Lens: a quality standing on its own

നല്ല	good — needs a noun after it
നല്ലത്	a good one — stands alone

-അത് is the word for *that*, and നല്ലത് is *the that-which-is-good*. The sense fits the shape, and the ending works on **every quality the book has given you** — *valiyatŭ, ceriyatŭ, putiyatŭ, palayatŭ* — with no exceptions among them.

മോശം filled the other hole. Five qualities and not one of them negative meant half of every opinion was unsayable. Before the *is* word, that ൾ is written മ: മോശമാണ്.

What you've built

An opinion, out of parts that were already lying about.

അത് നല്ലതാണ് എന്ന് ഞാൻ ചിന്തിക്കുന്നു. — I think it is good.

piece	new?
അത് നല്ലതാണ്	the two words of this chapter
എന്ന്	no — the quoting marker
ഞാൻ ചിന്തിക്കുന്നു	no — already paired with that marker

The quoting chapter did the hard part when it showed the marker takes any sentence you can build and hands it to a verb of saying, thinking, knowing or asking. So this chapter added **two vocabulary words and no grammar**, and a whole function arrived with them.

That is worth noticing about how this book is built: **machinery is often in place before there is anything worth carrying with it**, and the chapter that finally uses it can be very small.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *nallatŭ*, then *valiyatŭ*

- *mōśamāṇũ*
- the whole opinion, with *good*
- the same opinion, with *bad*
- which parts of it this chapter actually taught you

Before you move on

What does -അത് do to a quality? (**Makes it a thing that can stand alone.**) What is *bad*? (***mōśam.***) And how much new grammar did the opinion need? (**None.**)

Chapter 90

A Clause In Front

Modes: ⇨ voice (3) 👁 eyes (1) ⇨ Hands-free start: first 2 of 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say which one I mean by putting a whole clause in front of the noun, the way Malayalam does it.

From cold: the describing form in both tenses, the position it stands in, and the joining word English needs and Malayalam does not have.

90.1 പോകുന്ന (pōkunna) — that goes

Say *he goes*. Then say where a quality word has to stand when it describes a thing.

Grammar Lens: take the vowel sign off the end

പോകുന്നു is a sentence: *he goes*. Take **one vowel sign** off its last letter and it stops being a sentence and becomes a **describing word**:

പോകുന്നു *pōkunnu*

he goes — a whole sentence

പോകുന്ന *pōkunna*

that goes, going — describes something

The ു on the final letter is gone, leaving the letter with its own built-in *a*. **That is the entire change**, and it is visible on the page.

Now put it where a describing word goes — **in front**:

പോകുന്ന കുട്ടി — *pōkunna kuṭṭi* — **the child who is going**.

Read that against നല്ല കുട്ടി, *a good child*. **The two are built the same way**. A quality stands in front of the thing it describes; so does

a verb, once it has dropped that vowel sign. **Malayalam does not need a new arrangement to let a verb describe a noun — it reuses the one you have had since the adjective chapter.** You already produce **sixteen** of these verb forms across this book. Every one of them will do this.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *pōkunnu*, then *pōkunna*
- what came off the last letter
- which of the two could stand as a whole sentence
- *pōkunna kutṭi*

Before you move on

How do you turn a verb into a describing word? (**Take the vowel sign off its last letter.**) Where does it then stand? (**In front of the noun.**) And what else stands there? (**A quality word.**)

90.2 ഞാൻ വായിക്കുന്ന പുസ്തകം — the book I read

Say *I read* — the sentence, with its full ending. Then take the vowel sign off the end and say what is left.

Grammar Lens: the clause goes in front, and nothing joins it

The last lesson put **one word** in front of a noun. **A whole clause goes in the same place.**

ഞാൻ വായിക്കുന്ന പുസ്തകം

ñān vāyikkunna pustakam — **the book I read.**

Line it up against English and two things are different, not one:

English	the book that I read
Malayalam	ഞാൻ വായിക്കുന്ന പുസ്തകം

The clause has moved to the front — everything that describes the book comes before the word *book*, where English trails it behind. **And the joining word is gone entirely.** English needs *that*, *which* or *who* to staple the clause on. **Malayalam has no such word and needs none**, because the participle is already doing that job: dropping the vowel sign is what says *this verb is describing something*, and the noun that follows is what it describes. So the thing to unlearn is the reaching-for-a-joining-word habit. **There is nothing to translate *that* into.** Build the clause, drop the vowel sign, put the noun after it.

ഞാൻ വായിക്കുന്നു	I read
ഞാൻ വായിക്കുന്ന പുസ്തകം	the book I read

Only the last letter of the verb changed, and a noun arrived after it.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *ñān vāyikkunnu*
- *ñān vāyikkunna pustakani*
- which English word has no Malayalam counterpart here
- which side of the noun the clause sits on

Before you move on

Where does the describing clause go? (**In front of the noun.**)
 What word joins it on? (**None — there is no such word.**) And
 what marks the verb as describing? (**The missing vowel sign.**)

90.3 വന്ന (vanna) — that came

Say *the child who is going*. Then say the past of *to come* — the one form on this track that reshapes its stem.

Grammar Lens: the rule was never about the present

The describing form was made by taking a vowel sign off the end.
Nothing in that said which tense it had to be.

വന്നു <i>vannu</i>	he came — a whole sentence
വന്ന <i>vanna</i>	that came — describes something

The ു is gone, exactly as before.

വന്ന അധ്യാപകൻ — *vanna adhyāpakan* — **the teacher who came**.
 So there are two describing forms, and the difference between them is **when**, not how:

പോകുന്ന കുട്ടി	the child who is going
വന്ന അധ്യാപകൻ	the teacher who came

Both sit in front. Both dropped a vowel sign. **Neither has a joining word.**

What gets taken off is whatever vowel sign the **last letter** carries. A past form ending in ി loses that sign the same way — what is left in every case is the last letter carrying its own built-in *a*. **Look at the final letter and take its vowel sign off; that is the whole operation, whatever the tense was.**

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *vannu*, then *vanna*
- *vanna adhyāpakan*
- *pōkunna kuṭṭi*, then *vanna adhyāpakan*, and say what separates them
- what the operation is, in one instruction

Before you move on

What is *vanna*? (**That came.**) What was taken off to make it? (**The vowel sign on the last letter.**) And does the rule care

which tense it started from? (No.)

90.4 (a clause in front) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say *he goes*, then turn it into *that goes*. Do the same with *he came*.

Grammar Lens: one vowel sign, and a whole construction

sentence	describing form
പോകുന്നു he goes	പോകുന്ന that goes
വന്നു he came	വന്ന that came

The last letter loses its vowel sign and keeps its own built-in *a*. That is the whole operation, and it does not care which tense it started from.

Then the form stands **in front of the noun**, in the position a quality word has occupied since the adjective chapter:

പോകുന്ന കുട്ടി — the child who is going. വന്ന അധ്യാപകൻ — the teacher who came.

What you've built

A way to say which one you mean.

ഞാൻ വായിക്കുന്ന പുസ്തകം — the book I read.

Two things differ from English, and the second is the one to watch:

English	the book that I read
Malayalam	ഞാൻ വായിക്കുന്ന പുസ്തകം

The clause moved to the front, and the joining word disappeared. English needs *that*, *which* or *who*; Malayalam has no such word and needs none, because the missing vowel sign already says the verb is describing, and the noun after it is what is described. **There is nothing to translate *that* into**, and reaching for one is the habit to drop. Build the clause, take the vowel sign off, put the noun after it.

This is the largest single thing the track was missing, and it turned out to cost **one vowel sign** — because the position it needed was already

in use by the adjectives, and the verb forms were already in the learner's mouth.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *pōkunnu* → *pōkunna*
- *vannu* → *vanna*
- *pōkunna kut̤ti*
- *ñān vāyikkunna pustakam̄i*
- which English word has nothing to correspond to it

Before you move on

What turns a verb into a describing form? (**Taking the vowel sign off its last letter.**) Where does the clause stand? (**In front of the noun.**) And what joins it on? (**Nothing.**)

Chapter 91

What It Costs

Modes: ⇨ voice (4) 👁 eyes (1) ⇨ Hands-free start: first 3 of 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can go into a shop, ask what something costs, understand the answer and say that I am buying it.

From cold: the shop, the price, the money, the rupee and the buying verb, run as a four-line scene, and an accounting of how much of that scene was already owned.

91.1 കട (kaṭa) — a shop

Say the ending that means **in** or **at**, the one you have had since the first verbs.

You'll want to know: കട

കട — *kaṭa* — a shop.

This book has taught you rice, water, tea, coffee, milk, salt and a knife, and **not one word for the place any of them comes from**. That is the hole this chapter is here to fill, and it starts with the building.

It takes the in-ending exactly as you would expect, joining with a -യ- because the word ends in അ:

കടയിൽ — *kaṭayil* — in the shop, at the shop.

Nothing about that join is new. **It is the same choice the owner-ending makes**, decided by the same thing — the last sound of the noun.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *kaṭa*
- *kaṭayil*
- what decided the -യ- in the middle

Before you move on

What is a *kaṭa*? (**A shop.**) How do you say *at the shop*? (*kaṭayil.*)

91.2 വില പണം (vila, paṇam) — price and money

Say the word for a shop, and say it again meaning *at the shop*.

You'll want to know: വില, പണം

വില — *vila* — price, cost.

പണം — *paṇam* — money.

Two words, and between them they open a whole situation the book has kept shut.

വില	what a thing costs
പണം	what you pay with

English keeps them apart the same way, so there is nothing to untangle.

പണം ends in the ം, which means you already know what it will do when a case ending attaches to it: the ം gives way, exactly as it did on the state name and on the book. A word that ends this way tells you in advance how it will behave.

പുസ്തകത്തിന്റെ വില — *pustakattinre vila* — the price of the book.

Read that and every piece is old but one. **പുസ്തകം** changed shape before its ending, took the owner-ending, and **വില** followed it — the arrangement the place-words chapter established, carrying a new word.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *vila*
- *paṇam*
- which of the two is what a thing costs
- *pustakattinre vila*

Before you move on

What is *vila*? (**Price.**) What is *paṇam*? (**Money.**) And what does the ൊ on the second one warn you about? (**It will give way when a case ending attaches.**)

91.3 എത്ര രൂപ (etra rūpa) — how many rupees?

Say the word that asks **how much**. Then count the tens from thirty as far as you can.

You'll want to know: രൂപ, and the question it answers

രൂപ — *rūpa* — a rupee.

And now the question the whole chapter has been aiming at:

എത്ര രൂപ? — *etra rūpa?* — **how many rupees?** What does it cost?

Look at what that cost you. എത്ര was lifted out of the age question two chapters after you first met it, and it has been yours since. രൂപ is the one new word on this page. **The question is two words and one of them is old.**

The answer was out of reach until very recently:

അമ്പത് രൂപ	fifty rupees
നൂറ് രൂപ	a hundred rupees

Before the counting chapter you could not have said either. The count stopped at twenty, so every price above it was unsayable — which is exactly what that chapter's exam point warned about.

So this page is where three separate chapters meet: **the word that asks, the numbers that answer, and the unit they are counted in.**

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *rūpa*
- *etra rūpa?*
- *ampatŭ rūpa*
- *nūrŭ rūpa*
- which word in the question you already owned

Before you move on

How do you ask a price? (*etra rūpa?*) How many words is that? (**Two.**) And how many of them were new today? (**One.**)

91.4 വാങ്ങുക (vāṇṇuka) — to buy

Ask a price. Then say the verb *to take*.

You'll want to know: വാങ്ങുക

വാങ്ങുക — *vāṇṇuka* — to buy.

It is built the way your verbs are built, on the -ഉക ending you have had since your first ones, so there is nothing new in its shape — only its meaning.

ഞാൻ പുസ്തകം വാങ്ങുന്നു — *ñān pustakam vāṇṇunnu* — I buy the book.

Look at the object. പുസ്തകം is bare — **no ending on it** — because it is a thing and not a person, which is the rule the object chapter gave you. The verb changed and the rule did not.

With this word the chapter closes a circle. **You can name the place, ask the price, hear a number back, and say what you are doing there** — and of those four, only the place, the price and this verb were new.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *vāññuka*
- *ñān pustakam vāññunnu*
- why the book carries no ending
- *kaṭayil*, then the whole sentence again

Before you move on

What is *vāññuka*? (**To buy.**) Which ending does it share with your other verbs? (**-ഉക.**) And does the thing you buy take an object ending? (**No — it is not a person.**)

91.5 (what it costs) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say *shop*, *price* and *money*.

The exchange — a whole scene, in five words

കട	a shop
വില	price
പണം	money
രൂപ	a rupee
വാങ്ങുക	to buy

Put them in the order the situation happens in:

കടയിൽ — at the shop.

എത്ര രൂപ? — how many rupees?

അമ്പത് രൂപ. — fifty rupees.

ഞാൻ പുസ്തകം വാങ്ങുന്നു. — I buy the book.

What you've built

A scene, and most of it was already paid for.

Count what was actually new on those four lines. The shop, the rupee, the buying verb — **three words**. Everything else arrived earlier and was waiting:

piece	where it came from
-ഇൽ on the shop	your first verbs
എത്ര	lifted out of the age question
അമ്പൽ	the counting chapter
പുസ്തകം bare, with no object ending	the object chapter's rule for things

The numbers matter most here. Before the count went past twenty, every price above it was unsayable — which is exactly what that chapter's exam point had warned. **Teaching the tens is what made a price answerable**, and this chapter only had to name what is being counted.

That is worth noticing about the shape of the work: **a vocabulary chapter is cheap when the grammar under it has already been built**, and expensive when it has not.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *kaṭayil*
- *etra rūpa?*
- a price of your own, using any ten you know
- *ñān pustakani vāñnunu*
- which three words on this page were new

Before you move on

How do you ask what something costs? (*etra rūpa?*) What is *vila*? (**Price**.) And what had to be taught before a price could be answered at all? (**The numbers past twenty**.)

Chapter 92

Eating Out

Modes: 🗣️ voice (4) 🖐️ Hands-free start: all 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name food, find a place that serves it, and ask for the bill.

From cold: the general word for food, the eating place, the bill, and the rule that a borrowed word keeps only the meaning its borrowers needed.

92.1 ഭക്ഷണം (bhakṣaṇam) — food

Say the word for a meal. Say the word for cooked rice. Then try to say **food** and notice that you cannot.

You'll want to know: ഭക്ഷണം

ഭക്ഷണം — *bhakṣaṇam* — food.

This book has been unusually specific about eating. You own ഉൺ, a meal; ചോറ്, cooked rice; അരി, the raw grain — and until now **no word for the category all of them belong to.**

That is a common shape in a vocabulary that grows from the particular outward, and it is worth naming when it happens: **a language course can leave you able to order lunch and unable to say the word *food*.**

അരി	raw rice
ചോറ്	cooked rice
ഉൺ	a meal
ഭക്ഷണം	food — all of it

It ends in ഓ, so you already know what a **case ending** will do to it — the ഓ gives way to -ത്ത-, as it did on കേരളം and പുസ്തകം.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *bhakṣaṇam*
- the four food words from narrowest to widest
- the verb *to eat*

Before you move on

What is *bhakṣaṇam*? (**Food.**) Is it a particular dish or the whole category? (**The whole category.**)

92.2 ഹോട്ടൽ (*hōṭṭal*) — an eating place

Say the word for food. Say the word for a shop.

You'll want to know: ഹോട്ടൽ

ഹോട്ടൽ — *hōṭṭal* — a place that serves food.

Read it aloud and you will hear an English word inside it. **Do not trust it.**

In Kerala a ഹോട്ടൽ is ordinarily **somewhere you go to eat** — a tea-and-meals place, the sort with a board outside listing what is on today. **A bed is not what the word promises.**

ഹോട്ടലിൽ — *hōṭṭalil* — at the eating place. The in-ending attaches the ordinary way.

Why it's said this way

A word that crosses into another language stops belonging to the one it came from. It keeps whichever part of its meaning the borrowers needed and lets the rest go, and afterwards nobody has to consult the original.

That is worth holding on to as a habit, because **this will not be the last borrowed word you meet here**, and the one thing you must not do is assume it still means what it means at home.

You have already met borrowings that behaved themselves — കാപ്പി is coffee and മേശ came from Portuguese. ഹോട്ടൽ is the first one in this book that would mislead you if you trusted the source.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *hōṭṭal*
- what you would expect to find there
- *hōṭṭalil*
- what the English word would have led you to expect instead

Before you move on

What is a *hōṭṭal* in Kerala? (**A place to eat.**) Should a borrowed word be trusted to keep its old meaning? (**No.**)

92.3 ബിൽ (bil) — the bill

Ask how many rupees something is. Then say where you are.

You'll want to know: ബിൽ

ബിൽ — *bil* — the bill.

Another borrowing, and this one **kept its meaning intact** — which is the point of meeting it right after one that did not. **Borrowed words are not all alike; you have to check each one.**

The asking costs nothing new. എത്ര has been yours since the distance chapter, and വില since the shopping chapter:

എത്ര രൂപ?	how many rupees?
ബിൽ	the bill

What you've built

The far end of a meal.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *bil*
- *etra rūpa?*
- which of this chapter's two borrowings changed meaning on the way in

Before you move on

What is *bil*? (**The bill.**) And what is *vila*? (**Price.**)

92.4 (eating out) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say *food*, then say the place that serves it.

The exchange — the shape of a meal out

ഹോട്ടലിൽ — at the eating place.

ഭക്ഷണം — food.

ബിൽ. എത്ര രൂപ? — the bill. How many rupees?

Three new words, and the question at the end is one you have had since the shopping chapter.

Why it's said this way

	came from English	means here
ഹോട്ടൽ	<i>hotel</i>	a place to eat
ബിൽ	<i>bill</i>	the bill

One changed and one did not, and that is the whole reason they sit in the same chapter. **A word that crosses into another language stops belonging to the one it came from** — it keeps whichever part of its meaning the borrowers needed and lets the rest go. So the habit is: **check each borrowing, do not trust the family.**

Recognising the English inside a word tells you how to pronounce it and **nothing reliable about what it means.**

The food words, meanwhile, finally have a roof. അരി, ചോറ്, ഉണ്ണ് were all particular; ഭക്ഷണം is the category they belong to — and a course can easily leave you able to order lunch and unable to say the word *food*.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *bhakṣaṇam*
- *hōṭṭalil*
- *bil*, then ask how many rupees
- which of the two borrowings would mislead somebody who trusted English

Before you move on

What do you find at a *hōṭṭal*? (**Food.**) What is *bhakṣaṇam*? (**Food, the category.**) And what should you do with a borrowed word's original meaning? (**Check it rather than assume it.**)

Chapter 93

More Than One

Modes: ⇐ voice (2) 👁 eyes (2) ⇐ Hands-free start: first 1 of 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say that there is more than one of something, and I know when to leave the ending off.

From cold: the plural ending on a plain noun, the shape it takes on a noun ending in the anusvara, and the case where a number in front makes the ending unnecessary.

93.1 കുട്ടികൾ (kuṭṭikaḷ) — children

Say *a child*. Say *a shop*. Both are one of the thing.

Grammar Lens: the ending goes on the end

Every noun you own says *one*. To say *more than one*, put കൾ on the end:

one

more than one

കുട്ടി *kuṭṭi* — a child

കുട്ടികൾ *kuṭṭikaḷ* — children

കട *kaṭa* — a shop

കടകൾ *kaṭakaḷ* — shops

The front of the word does not move. Nothing is inserted, nothing is replaced; the ending arrives on the end and the word you already had is still sitting there in front of it.

That is the same shape as everything Malayalam has asked of you so far. The *in* ending, the *to* ending, the *of* ending, the *if* ending — each one came onto the back of a word and left the front of it alone. **A Malayalam word grows rightward**, and this is one more thing

growing there.

What you've built

You can now point at more than one of anything you can name, which is most of what this book has taught you. **Two nouns became four in one line**, and the same line will do it to every other noun you own. English gets this wrong often enough to have a page of exceptions for it — *child* and *children* share four letters and part company after them. Here the word you learned stays whole and visible.

Your turn

- Say it: *kutti*, then *kuttikal*
- Say it: *kata*, then *katakala*
- Look: at കുട്ടികൾ and find where കുട്ടി ends
- Say it: which end of the word the new part arrived on

Before you move on

What makes a noun more than one? (**കൾ on the end.**) Does anything change at the front of the word? (**No.**)

93.2 പുസ്തകങ്ങൾ (pustakanniḷ) — books

Say *a book*. Say what its last letter is. Then make *a child* into *children*.

Grammar Lens: a noun ending in ി trades it away

പുസ്തകം does not become *pustakanikaḷ*. The ി comes off and റങ്ങൾ goes on in its place:

one	more than one
പുസ്തകം <i>pustakani</i> — a book	പുസ്തകങ്ങൾ <i>pustakanniḷ</i> — books
മരം <i>maram</i> — a tree	മരങ്ങൾ <i>maranniḷ</i> — trees
The money lesson said that a word ending in ി tells you in advance	

how it will behave. **This is one of the things it was telling you.** You do not have to remember which nouns take which ending — you can see it on the page, in the last letter.

What you've built

Now look at a word you have had since your first pages.

നിങ്ങൾ *ninīṇaḷ* — you.

Read the end of it. That is the ending you learned a moment ago, sitting where it has always sat. The polite *you* was introduced to you as the plural *you* used for one person — and this is what made it plural.

Nothing you were taught then was wrong, and nothing has to be unlearned. **A piece of the language you had been pronouncing for months turns out to have a name and a job,** and you can now put it on nouns of your own.

Your turn

- *Say it: pustakani*, then *pustakanīṇaḷ*
- *Say it: marani*, then *maranīṇaḷ*
- *Say it: kuṭṭi*, then *kuṭṭikaḷ*
- *Look:* at നിങ്ങൾ and പുസ്തകങ്ങൾ, and find the part they share
- *Say it:* which letter on the end of a noun sends you to this ending

Before you move on

What happens to the ഞ when the plural arrives? (**It is traded for** ഞങ്ങൾ.) Which noun tells you to expect that? (**One whose last letter is** ഞ.) Where else have you been saying that ending? (**On the end of the respectful you.**)

93.3 രണ്ട് പുസ്തകം (raṇṭṭu pustakam) — two books

Make *a book* into *books*. Then say *fifty rupees*.

Grammar Lens: the number has said it already

രണ്ട് പുസ്തകം — *raṇṭṭu pustakam* — **two books**.

The noun is back to the shape it had before this chapter started, and the meaning is still more than one. രണ്ട് in front has done the counting, so the ending has nothing left to add and is left off.

പുസ്തകങ്ങൾ
രണ്ട് പുസ്തകം

books — how many is not said
two books — the number says
how many

Both are good Malayalam. The ending is carrying information, and where the number already carries it, the ending can go.

What you've built

This is not new to you. Go back over your own sentences:

അമ്പത് രൂപ — fifty rupees.

നൂറ് രൂപ — a hundred rupees.

രണ്ട് മണി — two o'clock.

Not one of those nouns took an ending, and every one of them was right. You had been counting this way for chapters before anybody handed you the ending, because the shape was correct and you had no reason to question it.

So the lesson here costs you nothing to do and something to notice: **an English speaker's instinct to reach for the plural after a number is the habit to put down**. Say the number, then say the noun as you learned it.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *pustakaṇṇiḷ*, then *raṇṭṭu pustakam*
- *ampatṭu rūpa*
- which of the two ways says how many
- what you would put after *mūnnu* to mean three books

Before you move on

Does a noun with a number in front need the plural ending? (**No** — the number has said how many.) Had you been doing that already? (**Yes**, every time you gave a price or an hour.)

93.4 (more than one) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Make *a child* into *children*, and *a book* into *books*. The two answers do not end the same way.

Grammar Lens: one ending, wearing two faces

one

കുട്ടി *kutti*

കട *kaṭa*

പുസ്തകം *pustakam*

മരം *maram*

more than one

കുട്ടികൾ *kuttikal*

കടകൾ *kaṭakal*

പുസ്തകങ്ങൾ *pustakaṇṇiḷ*

മരങ്ങൾ *maranṇiḷ*

The last letter of the noun decides which face you see. A noun ending in ം trades that letter for ഞൾ; anything else takes കൾ on the end and keeps everything it had.

Look down the right-hand column and read only the ends: ൾ closes all four. The two shapes are one ending, and the ം is what bends it.

What you've built

Two things worth holding onto, and neither is a new word.

The ending was already in your mouth. നിങ്ങൾ — the respectful *you* — has carried it since your earliest pages, and it was plural in shape from the day you met it.

The ending comes off again when a number is there.

രണ്ട് പുസ്തകം — two books. അമ്പത് രൂപ — fifty

rupees.

The number in front has said how many, so the noun goes back to the form you first learned. Every price you have given and every hour you have told was already built this way.

So this chapter added **no vocabulary at all**. What it added was a reading of material you already had: an ending you had been pronouncing, and a habit you had been performing correctly without being told why.

Your turn

- Say it: *kutti* → *kuttikaḷ*
- Say it: *pustakam* → *pustakanniḷ*
- Say it: *maram* → *maranniḷ*
- Say it: *raṇṭṭu pustakam*
- Look: at നിങ്ങൾ, and say what its last part is doing

Before you move on

Which ending does a noun ending in ാ take? (ങ്ങൾ, in place of the ാ.) Which does every other noun take? (കൾ, on the end.) And when a number stands in front? (**Neither** — the noun stays as it was.)

Chapter 94

Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow

Modes: ⇄ voice (4) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say which day something happened on or will happen on.

From cold: the three day words, the three verb endings they travel with, and the observation that one of the three was already owned but locked inside a farewell.

94.1 ഇന്ന് (innŭ) — today

Say *day*. You have had the word for a day since early on. You have never had a word for **this** one.

What to know first

ഇന്ന് — *innŭ* — today.

ഇന്ന് ഞാൻ പോകുന്നു. — *innŭ ñān pōkunnu* — “Today I go.”

The word goes **in front**, before the person and the verb. That is where a time word sits in this language, and you have been putting things there since you learned to say *now*.

What you've built

This is smaller than it looks and it opens more than it looks.
Every sentence you have made so far has floated free of any particular day. You could say that you go, that you went, that you will go — and nothing in the sentence said **when**. A listener had to guess from the room.

One word ends that. The verb was already carrying the tense; ഇന്ന് gives it a day to sit on.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *innũ*
- *innũ ñān pōkunnu*
- where in the sentence the time word stands

Before you move on

What is *today*? (ഇന്ന്.) Where does it go in the sentence? (In front.)

94.2 ഇന്നലെ (*innale*) — yesterday

Say *today*. Then say *I went* — the past of the verb you have used most.

What to know first

ഇന്നലെ — *innale* — yesterday.

ഇന്നലെ ഞാൻ പോയി. — *innale ñān pōyi* — “Yesterday I went.”

Put the two words side by side and read the fronts:

ഇന്ന് <i>innũ</i>	today
ഇന്നലെ <i>innale</i>	yesterday

They begin the same way. Yesterday is today with something added on the end — which is the direction this language has been growing words in all along, and here it is doing it to a day.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

You do not have to take it apart to use it, and you should not force a story onto the tail. **What is worth seeing is the shared front**, because it is what will make the pair easy to keep apart from *tomorrow*, which begins somewhere else entirely.

Your turn

- Say it: *innũ*, then *innale*
- Say it: *innale ñān pōyi*
- Look: at the two words and find where they stop matching

Before you move on

What is *yesterday*? (ഇന്നലെ.) What does it share with *today*? (Its opening.)

94.3 നാളെ ഞാൻ പോകും (nāḷe ñān pōkum) — tomorrow I will go

Say *today* and *yesterday*. Then say the goodbye you learned in your first week — the one that promises to see somebody again.

Grammar Lens: a word walks out of a phrase

You have owned നാളെ since that goodbye. നാളെ കാണാം — see you tomorrow. Until now it has lived only there, glued to the seeing. Take it out and stand it in front of a sentence of your own:

നാളെ ഞാൻ പോകും. — *nāḷe ñān pōkum* —
“Tomorrow I will go.”

Nothing had to be learned to do that. The word was in your mouth, the position was the one you gave *today* two lessons ago, and the verb was already yours. A fixed phrase was holding a word that

could stand on its own.

Grammar Lens: three days, three endings, one shape

Now put the three together and watch what moves:

ഇന്നലെ ഞാൻ പോയി	<i>innale ñān pōyi</i>	yesterday I went
ഇന്ന് ഞാൻ പോകുന്നു	<i>innũ ñān pōkunnu</i>	today I go
നാളെ ഞാൻ പോകും	<i>nāḷe ñān pōkum̐</i>	tomorrow I will go

The middle of every line is identical. Only two things change, and they change together: the day word at the front, and the ending on the verb at the back.

The day word does not make the tense — the verb was doing that before you had any of these words. What the day word does is **say which day**, and the two agreeing is what a listener hears as an ordinary sentence.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *innale ñān pōyi*
- *innũ ñān pōkunnu*
- *nāḷe ñān pōkum̐*
- the three lines again, and name what is the same in all of them
- where you first met the word for tomorrow

Before you move on

Which phrase had been holding *tomorrow*? (നാളെ കാണാം.)
 What changes between the three lines? (**The day word and the verb ending.**) What carries the tense? (**The verb.**)

94.4 (yesterday, today, tomorrow) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Name the day you are standing in, and the one behind it.

Grammar Lens: the three lines

ഇന്നലെ ഞാൻ പോയി	yesterday I went
ഇന്ന് ഞാൻ പോകുന്നു	today I go
നാളെ ഞാൻ പോകും	tomorrow I will go

Read straight down the middle: **ഞാൻ** three times, unmoved. The front and the back of each line change together, and everything between them holds still.

The verb carries the tense. The day word says which day. Neither is doing the other's work.

What you've built

Two of these words were new. **The third was already yours and you could not use it.**

നാളെ had been sitting inside **നാളെ കാണാം** since your first week, doing nothing but ending a conversation. A learner who had said that goodbye a hundred times still could not say *tomorrow I will go*, because the word had never been shown standing anywhere else. That is worth noticing as a habit and not only as a fact: **a phrase you learned whole may be holding a word you can use apart from it.** When one of them turns out to detach, you gain a word without learning one.

And with these three, **every sentence you own can now be dated.** The tenses were built chapters ago and had nowhere to land.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *innale, innŭ, nāle* — in that order
- *innale ñān pōyi*
- *nāle ñān pōkum*

- which of the three words you already had, and where

Before you move on

Yesterday, today, tomorrow? (ഇന്നലെ, ഇന്ന്, നാളെ.) Where does a day word stand? (**In front.**) And what tells you the tense? (**The verb ending.**)

Chapter 95

Open, Closed, In, Out

Modes: ⇄ voice (4) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can open and close a door, ask somebody else to, and say which side of it I am on.

From cold: the two verbs, the asking ending they share with the first commands, and the pair a doorway divides.

95.1 തുറക്കുക (turakkuka) — to open

Say *door*. You have been able to name it for a long time and have never been able to do anything to it.

What to know first

തുറക്കുക — *turakkuka* — to open.

ഞാൻ വാതിൽ തുറക്കുന്നു. — *ñān vātil turakkunnu* — “I open the door.”

Look at what the sentence asked of you. **Nothing new but the verb.** The doer in front, the thing in the middle, the verb at the end — and വാതിൽ takes no ending, because it is a thing and not a person.

What you've built

തുറക്കുന്നു <i>turakkunnu</i>	opens
തുറന്നു <i>turannu</i>	opened
തുറക്കും <i>turakkum</i>	will open

Two of those three you already knew how to build. Present and future are the stem plus *-unnu* or *-um*, exactly as they were on the first verbs you learned.

The past is the one you have to be told, and you were warned about this a long way back: the coming-verb's lesson said the past “*is not*” built that way, that its stem collapses, and that **no rule would have told you so**. Here it happens again — തുറക്ക- shortens to തുറ- before the ending.

Guessing from the present would give you the wrong word. That is not a new difficulty; it is **the same single difficulty Malayalam has**, arriving on schedule. Learn a verb's past and nothing else about it can catch you out.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *turakkuka*
- *ñān vātil turakkunnu*
- the same sentence about yesterday

Before you move on

What is *to open*? (തുറക്കുക.) Does the door take an ending after it? (**No** — it is a thing.)

95.2 അടയ്ക്കുക (aṭaykkuka) — to close

Say *to open*. Then say *listen* — the command form from your first commands.

What to know first

അടയ്ക്കുക — *aṭaykkuka* — to close.

ഞാൻ വാതിൽ അടയ്ക്കുന്നു. — *ñān vātil aṭaykkunnu* — “I close the door.”

Same shape as the opening verb, and വാതിൽ is the thing being closed, not the thing doing the closing.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

Now ask both of them as a request, using the ending you have had since the command chapter:

തുറക്കൂ <i>turakkū</i>	open it
അടയ്ക്കൂ <i>aṭaykkū</i>	close it

That is the same ending as കേൾക്കൂ. One long ൂ on the end turns a verb into something you can ask for, and it did not care which verb you handed it.

This is the form that goes on a sign, and it is the form you say at a door with your hands full.

Your turn

- Say it: *aṭaykkuka*
- Say it: *turakkū*, then *aṭaykkū*
- Say it: *vātil aṭaykkū*
- Look: at the end of കേൾക്കൂ and അടയ്ക്കൂ, and find what they share

Before you move on

What is *to close*? (അടയ്ക്കുക.) How do you ask somebody to do it? (അടയ്ക്കൂ — the long ending.)

95.3 അകത്ത് (akattŭ) — inside

Say *open it* and *close it*. A door is worth opening because of what is on the other side of it.

What to know first

Two words, and they are the two halves of the same line:

അകത്ത് <i>akattŭ</i>	inside
പുറത്ത് <i>purattŭ</i>	outside

ഞാൻ അകത്ത് ആണ്. — *nān akattŭ āṇŭ* — “I am inside.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

Read the ends and not the fronts. The two words end the same way as each other, and what differs is only the front — where the whole meaning sits. One opens onto a room, the other onto a street. The chapter before this had a pair the other way round: ഇന്ന് and ഇന്നലെ shared their *opening* and parted at the tail. Here the tail matches and the fronts part. **Both pairs are easy for the same reason** — one end holds still while you listen to the other.

Your turn

- *Say it:* *akattŭ*, then *purattŭ*
- *Say it:* *nān akattŭ āṇŭ*
- *Say it:* the same sentence about being outside
- *Look:* at the two words and say which part carries the difference

Before you move on

Inside and outside? (അകത്ത്, പുറത്ത്.) Which part of the two words is doing the work? (**The front** — the ends match.)

95.4 (open, closed, in, out) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say *to open* and *to close*, then ask somebody to do each.

Grammar Lens: four words, and none of them needed a new rule

തുറക്കുക	to open
അടയ്ക്കുക	to close
തുറക്കൂ	open it
അടയ്ക്കൂ	close it

The asking form is **the ending you have had since കേൾക്കൂ**, put on two verbs that had never seen it. The three tense endings came the same way, from a verb you learned long before these.

Two words bought four forms, because the endings were already yours.

What you've built

ഞാൻ അകത്ത് ആണ്. — I am inside.

വാതിൽ അടയ്ക്കൂ. — close the door.

The door was named a long way back and nothing could be done to it or about it. Now it opens, it closes, and there are two sides of it you can name.

That is the ordinary shape of this stage: **the sentence was ready before the words were**. The arrangement, the tense endings, the asking ending and the bare object all came from chapters that had nothing to do with doors.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *turakkuka* → *turakkū*
- *aṭaykkuka* → *aṭaykkū*
- *vātil aṭaykkū*
- *ñān akattū āṇū*
- which ending the asking form shares with a word from your first commands

Before you move on

Open and close? (തുറക്കുക, അടയ്ക്കുക.) How do you ask for either? (**The long ു on the end.**) Inside and outside? (അകത്ത്, പുറത്ത്.)

Chapter 96

Easy and Difficult

Modes: ⇄ voice (3) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 3 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say that something is easy or difficult.

From cold: the pair, and the welding of a word ending in anusvara onto aaNu, which the learner has been performing since near the beginning without being shown it.

96.1 എളുപ്പം (eḷuppaṁ) — easy

Say *this*. Then say the little word that finishes a sentence by saying something **is** so.

What to know first

എളുപ്പം — *eḷuppaṁ* — **easy**.

ഇത് എളുപ്പമാണ്. — *iṭṣ̣ eḷuppaṁāṇ̣ṣ̣* — “**This is easy.**”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

The word ends in ം, and you have been told before that a word ending that way **says in advance how it will behave**. Here is another thing it says.

Put ആണ് after it and the two run together:

എളുപ്പം + ആണ് → എളുപ്പമാണ്

Nothing happens to the sound. That ം is already the sound **m**,

and here it stays exactly that. Only the *writing* moves: the **m** now has a vowel sitting after it, and the bare **ം** cannot carry one, so it is written with the full letter **മ** instead.

Not every ending is this quiet. A case ending takes the **ം** away and puts **ത്ത** in its place — കേരളത്തിൽ, പുസ്തകത്തിന്റെ. The *and* ending puts **വും** there. The plural puts **ങ്ങൾ**, as you saw at പുസ്തകങ്ങൾ.

ആണ് takes nothing away at all, and it is not alone in that: ഇല്ല does the same, which is why സാരമില്ല has carried a **മ** since your first pages.

So what a word ending in **ം** does **depends on what attaches to it.** Say the two words one after the other, quickly. **You will not hear anything change** — which is why you have been doing this for most of the book without noticing:

സുഖമാണ്	(I am) well
ഇഷ്ടമാണ്	(I) like it
മോശമാണ്	(it) is bad

Every one of those is a word ending in **ം** with **ആണ്** welded on.

You were shown this once, at മോശം. Here it is again — and this time it is not a fact about one word you were given. **It is something you do**, to a word you met a minute ago.

Your turn

- Say it: *eluppari*
- Say it: *elupparāṇ*
- Say it: *itū elupparāṇ*
- Look: at സുഖമാണ് and എളുപ്പമാണ്, and find the part that is the same

Before you move on

What is *easy*? (എളുപ്പം.) What happens to its **ം** when **ആണ്** arrives? (**It gets written as മ**, and the sound does not change.) Does every ending leave the **m** alone? (**No** — a case ending puts **ത്ത** there instead, and the plural puts **ങ്ങൾ**.)

96.2 പ്രയാസം (prayāsaṁ) — difficult

Say *this is easy*. All of it, in one breath.

What to know first

പ്രയാസം — *prayāsaṁ* — difficult.

ഇത് പ്രയാസമാണ്. — *iṭ prayāsamāṇ̣* — “This is difficult.”

It ends in ം as well, so it behaves the way the last one did, and you did not have to be told a second time.

ഇത് എളുപ്പമാണ്	this is easy
ഇത് പ്രയാസമാണ്	this is difficult

One word apart, and the sentence is the opposite. Everything around it holds still.

What you’ve built

This is a pair you can say about anything you can point at — a word, a letter, a road, a lesson. It is also the first thing most learners want to say about the language itself, and **you can now say it in the language**, which is a better place to complain from.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *prayāsaṁ*
- *iṭ prayāsamāṇ̣*
- the two sentences one after the other, and hear where they part

Before you move on

Easy and difficult? (എളുപ്പം, പ്രയാസം.) Did the second one need a new rule? (No — it ends the same way, so it behaves the same way.)

96.3 (easy, difficult) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say *this is easy*, then say the opposite.

Grammar Lens: the welding was already yours

ഇത് എളുപ്പമാണ്	this is easy
ഇത് പ്രയാസമാണ്	this is difficult

Two new words, and **no new grammar at all**. Both end in ഓ, and a word ending in ഓ welds onto ആണ്: the **m** sound stays exactly where it was, and only its spelling moves — it is written മ, because the bare sign cannot carry the vowel that now sits after it.

ആണ് **takes nothing away, and it is not the only one that does not**. A case ending puts ത്ത where the ഓ was —

കേരളത്തിൽ, പുസ്തകത്തിന്റെ — the *and* ending puts വും, and the plural puts ങ്ങൾ. ആണ് leaves the **m** where it is, and so does ഇല്ല: സാരമില്ല has carried that മ since your first pages.

You were doing it long before this chapter:

സുഖമാണ്	well
ഇഷ്ടമാണ്	liked
മോശമാണ്	bad

It was named once, at മോശം, and it never had to become a rule you carried, because you had no word of your own to put through it. **Now you have two**, and the pattern stops being a fact about somebody else's word.

What you've built

A judgement you can make about anything you can point at. It is worth noticing what the chapter did **not** need. No new arrangement, no new ending, no exception. **Two words, dropped into a frame that was already running**. That is what most of this stage looks like now: the language was built first and the vocabulary arrives into it.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *eḷuppaṁ* → *eḷuppamāṇŭ*
- *prayāsami* → *prayāsamāṇŭ*
- *itŭ eḷuppamāṇŭ*
- *itŭ prayāsamāṇŭ*
- one older word that welds the same way

Before you move on

Easy and difficult? (എളുപ്പം, പ്രയാസം.) How is the ഃ written when ആണ് follows? (As മ — the sound stays the same.) Was that new in this chapter? (No — you had been saying it for most of the book.)

Chapter 97

Beautiful, and Not

Modes: ⇄ voice (4) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say that something is beautiful, name beauty itself, and deny it.

From cold: both ends of one quality, and which letter arrives when aaNu follows a word.

97.1 സുന്ദരം (sundaram) — beautiful

Say *this is easy*. You built that sentence one chapter ago.

What to know first

സുന്ദരം — *sundaram* — beautiful.

ഇത് സുന്ദരമാണ്. — *itṣ sundaramāṇṣ* — “This is beautiful.”

What you’ve built

Read what you did there. The word ends in ം, so it welds onto ആണ് the way the last chapter’s two words did, and you did it without being told.

ഇത് എളുപ്പമാണ്	this is easy
ഇത് പ്രയാസമാണ്	this is difficult
ഇത് സുന്ദരമാണ്	this is beautiful

That is what a frame is for. **The chapter before this one cost you a rule; this one cost you a word**, and the weld came free.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *sundaram*
- *itū sundaramāṇū*
- the same sentence about something being easy

Before you move on

What is *beautiful*? (സുന്ദരം.) Did you need a new rule to say *this is beautiful*? (No — it ends in ു, like എളുപ്പം and പ്രയാസം.)

97.2 ഭംഗി (bhaṅgi) — beauty

Say *this is beautiful*. Then say *child* — you have had that word a long time.

What to know first

ഭംഗി — *bhaṅgi* — **beauty**.

ഇത് ഭംഗിയാണ്. — *itū bhaṅgiyāṇū* — “**This is beautiful.**”

Read the gloss again. The word means *beauty*, but the sentence does **not** say *this is beauty* — it says **this is beautiful**, and it is the way you are most likely to hear it said.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

Two different things are happening here, and only one of them is new.

സുന്ദരം → സുന്ദരമാണ്

the **m** was already there

ഭംഗി → ഭംഗിയാണ്

a **യ** is genuinely added

In സുന്ദരമാണ് nothing is added at all. The ം is the sound **m**, and it stays; only its *writing* moves, because the bare sign cannot carry a vowel. **You were told that last chapter.**

ഭംഗി is the other case, and you have met the reason before. It ends in ഇ, ആണ് begins with a vowel, and Malayalam will not let two vowels sit together — so a letter slides in between them, and after ഇ that letter is യ. **The joining chapter said exactly that** about അരിയം.

What is new is only where it happens. ഇത് എന്റെ കുട്ടിയാണ് — *this is my child* — has the same യ, for the same reason.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *bhamigī*, then *bhamigiyāṇũ*
- *sundaramī*, then *sundaramāṇũ*
- which of the two actually gained a sound, and which only changed its spelling

Before you move on

What is *beauty*? (ഭംഗി.) Why does a letter come in before ആണ്? (**Two vowels will not sit together.**) And after ഇ, which letter is it? (യ.) Is anything added in സുന്ദരമാണ്? (**No** — that **m** was already there.)

97.3 ഇത് സുന്ദരമല്ല (iṭṣ sundaramalla) — this is not beautiful

Say *this is beautiful*. Then say the word that denies being what you were called.

Grammar Lens: the denial welds too

ഇത് സുന്ദരമല്ല. — *iṭṣ sundaramalla* — “This is not beautiful.”

You already know how that was built. അല്ല is the negative of ആണ്, and it welds on the same way:

സുന്ദരം + ആണ്	സുന്ദരമാണ് — this is beautiful
സുന്ദരം + അല്ല	സുന്ദരമല്ല — this is not beautiful

Same **മ**, same reason: the **മ** was always there and now has a vowel after it, so it is written with the full letter.

When you first met അല്ല it was written apart — ഞാൻ അധ്യാപകൻ അല്ല, *I am not a teacher*. That was a choice about writing, not a different grammar. Weld them and you get ഞാൻ അധ്യാപകനല്ല — *ñān adhyāpakanalla* — which is as ordinary as the other.

And look at what the **ൻ** does there. You were shown this at അധ്യാപകനെ: a chillu cannot carry a vowel, so when a vowel arrives behind it the full letter comes back — **ൻ** → **ന**. It happens here too: ഇത് എന്റെ മകനാണ്, *this is my son*.

A consonant does not. നിങ്ങൾക്ക് keeps its **ൾ**; the vowel is what forces the change.

And do not carry any of it across to the **ം**, which does different things for different endings, as you saw last chapter.

What you’ve built

Both ends of the same line, from one new word and one you already had.

This is how the far end of most qualities will arrive for a while: **not by a second word, but by denying the first one**. It is what a learner can build today, and it is what a speaker often says anyway.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *itū sundaramāṇū*
- *itū sundaramalla*
- the two one after the other, and hear where they part
- which letter സുന്ദരമാണ് and സുന്ദരമല്ല share in the middle, and why
- *ñān adhyāpakanalla*

Before you move on

How do you say *this is not beautiful*? (ഇത് സുന്ദരമല്ല.) Does അല്ല weld on the way ആണ് does? (Yes — same മ, same reason.) What does the ണ do when a vowel follows? (It goes back to ന.) And before a consonant? (It stays a chillu.)

97.4 (beautiful, and not) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say *this is beautiful*, then deny it.

Grammar Lens: two different events

word	joined to ആണ്	what happened
എളുപ്പം	എളുപ്പമാണ്	the m was already there
സുന്ദരം	സുന്ദരമാണ്	the m was already there
കുട്ടി	കുട്ടിയാണ്	a യ was added
ഭംഗി	ഭംഗിയാണ്	a യ was added

The two halves are not the same event. In the top pair nothing is added — the **m** was always in the word, and only its writing moves once a vowel sits behind it. In the bottom pair a letter genuinely appears, because the word ends in a vowel and two vowels will not sit together; both of these end in ഇ, and after ഇ that letter is യ.

And **what attaches matters too**, not only how the word ended: the same സുന്ദരം gives സുന്ദരവും when the *and* ending arrives.

What you've built

ഇത് സുന്ദരമാണ്. — this is beautiful.

ഇത് സുന്ദരമല്ല. — this is not beautiful.

The second is not a second word. അല്ല is the negative of ആണ് and welds the same way — **same ൧, same reason.**

So one new quality gave you both ends of a line. That is how the far end of most qualities will arrive for a while — **by denying the near one**, which is both what you can build today and what a speaker often says anyway.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *sundarami* → *sundaramāṇṁ*
- *bhamigi* → *bhamigiyāṇṁ*
- *itū sundaramalla*
- which of the four joined forms actually gained a sound, and why

Before you move on

Beautiful, and beauty? (സുന്ദരം, ഭംഗി.) Which of the two gains a sound before ആണ്? (ഭംഗി — a യ.) And how do you deny it? (ഇത് സുന്ദരമല്ല.)

Chapter 98

Games and Films

Modes: ⇐ voice (3) 👁 eyes (1) ⇐ Hands-free start: first 2 of 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name a game, say that I play, and name a film.

From cold: the three leisure words, and what actually decides the letter that slides in before aaNu.

98.1 കളി (kaḷi) — a game

Say *this is beautiful* — the word and the ending together.

What to know first

കളി — *kaḷi* — a game, and also play itself.

ഇത് കളിയാണ്. — *itṣ kaḷiyāṇṣ* — “This is a game.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

You built that ending without being told. കളി ends in the same vowel ഭംഗി does, so the same യ slides in before ആണ്:

word	joined to ആണ്
ഭംഗി	ഭംഗിയാണ് (<i>bhaṁgiyāṇṣ</i>)
കളി	കളിയാണ് (<i>kaḷiyāṇṣ</i>)

You have seen this done before, and not only last chapter.

കൂട്ടി has been taking the same യ since ഇത് എന്റെ കൂട്ടിയാണ്, and

for the same reason: it ends in ഇ too, ആണ് begins with a vowel, and something has to stand between them.

What you've built

This is the book's first word for play.

You could already say that you read, that you eat, that you work, that you go. Every one of those has a point outside itself. കളി names the kind of doing that is its own point — and until this lesson the book had given you no word for it.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *kalī*
- *itŭ kalīyāṇŭ*
- *bhaṇigiyāṇŭ*, then *kalīyāṇŭ*, and hear the part they share

Before you move on

What is *a game*? (കളി.) കളി ends in ഇ — which letter slides in before ആണ്? (യ — the same one ഭംഗി and കൂട്ടി take.)

98.2 കളിക്കുക (kalikkuka) — to play

Say *a game*. Then say *to read*.

What to know first

കളിക്കുക — *kalikkuka* — to play.

ഞാൻ കളിക്കുന്നു. — *ñān kalikkunnu* — “I play.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

The noun is sitting inside the verb. കളി is the game; കളിക്കുക is doing it.

And the shape is one you have had for a long time. Put it beside the

reading verb:

വായിക്കുക → വായിക്കുന്നു	reads
കളിക്കുക → കളിക്കുന്നു	plays

Verb after verb in this book already ends in **-ിക്കുക** — സംസാരിക്കുക, വായിക്കുക, ചോദിക്കുക, കുടിക്കുക — so this one arrives asking nothing new of you. The only new part is the two syllables at the front.

Your turn

- Say it: *kaḷikkuka*
- Say it: *ñān kaḷikkunnu*
- Say it: *vāyikkunnu*, then *kaḷikkunnu*
- Look: at കളി inside കളിക്കുക

Before you move on

What is *to play*? (കളിക്കുക.) What word can you see inside it? (കളി.) Did its ending need learning? (**No** — the reading verb already had it.)

98.3 സിനിമ (sinima) — a film

Say *a game*. Then say the borrowed word for a place that serves food.

What to know first

സിനിമ — *sinima* — a film, and the cinema as well.

ഇത് നല്ല സിനിമയാണ്. — *itṭ nalla sinimayāṇṭ* — “This is a good film.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

A borrowed word again, like the eating-place word — and this one kept far more of what it came with than that one did.

Its last letter is **മ**, and a consonant in this script carries an *a* of its own: **മ** is *ma*. So **സിനിമ** ends in the vowel **അ**, **ആണ്** opens with a vowel too, and — as with **കളി** — something has to stand between the two. Here that something is **യ** once more: **സിനിമയാണ്**.

Do not read that as a vowel brings യ. Which letter slides in is settled by *which* vowel the word ends in, and you already have one that goes the other way:

ends in	word	joined to ആണ്
ഇ	ഭംഗി	ഭംഗിയാണ് (<i>bhaṅgiyāṇũ</i>)
ഇ	കളി	കളിയാണ് (<i>kaḷiyāṇũ</i>)
അ	സിനിമ	സിനിമയാണ് (<i>sinimayāṇũ</i>)
ഉ	പശു	പശുവാണ് (<i>paśuvāṇũ</i>)

The cow is the row to look at. ഇ and അ both take യ; a full ഉ takes വ. The gap gets filled either way — the vowel at the end says with what.

The faint half-u is not one of these vowels. എന്ത് ends in one, and it has been welding to ആണ് since your very first question: എന്ത് + ആണ് is എന്താണ് — *entāṇũ* — with nothing slid in and that breathed -*ũ* quietly given up instead. നല്ലത് does the same: നല്ലതാണ്.

That -*ũ* is not a **full** vowel, so when an ending arrives it steps out of the way rather than sending a letter in ahead of it.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *sinima*
- *itũ nalla sinimayāṇũ*
- the four joined forms in the table, one after another

Before you move on

What is *a film*? (സിനിമ.) സിനിമ ends in അ — what slides in before ആണ്? (യ — സിനിമയാണ്.) And പശു, which ends in ഉ? (വ — പശുവാൻ, *paśuvāṇŭ*.)

98.4 (a game, playing, a film) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say *a game*, then *to play*, then *a film*.

Grammar Lens: the vowel at the end chooses

ആണ് opens with a vowel. A word that ends in a **full** vowel cannot sit straight against it, so a letter comes in between. **Which letter is not free** — the word's own last vowel settles it:

ends in	word	joined to ആണ്
ഇ	ഭംഗി	ഭംഗിയാണ് (<i>bhamigiyāṇŭ</i>)
ഇ	കളി	കളിയാണ് (<i>kalīyāṇŭ</i>)
അ	സിനിമ	സിനിമയാണ് (<i>sinimayāṇŭ</i>)
ഉ	പശു	പശുവാൻ (<i>paśuvāṇŭ</i>)

Three rows out of four take യ, and that is exactly why the fourth is worth holding on to. If you carry away *vowels take യ*, the cow will catch you out. What you want is *the last vowel decides* — and ഇ and അ happen to decide the same way, while ഉ does not.

And the breathed half-u at the end of a word is not in this table at all. എന്ത് + ആണ് is എന്താണ് — *entāṇŭ* — with nothing slid in and that faint -ŭ given up instead, and നല്ലത് gives നല്ലതാണ് the same way. Those do not end in a **full** vowel, so the question this table answers never arises for them.

What you've built

കളി is the game. കളിക്കുക is doing it — the noun still visible inside the verb, wearing an ending you had long before this chapter:

ഞാൻ വായിക്കുന്നു. — I read.

ഞാൻ കളിക്കുന്നു. — I play.

Two lines built the same way, and only one of them was ever taught to you as a pattern. The other you assembled.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *kaḷi, kaḷikkuka, sinima*
- *itū kaḷiyāṇū*, then *itū nalla sinimayāṇū*
- *ñān kaḷikkunnu*
- which of the four table rows takes ഡ, and what it ends in

Before you move on

A game, to play, a film? (കളി, കളിക്കുക, സിനിമ.) What decides the letter that slides in before ആണ്? (The full vowel the word ends in.) Which of these four ends in ഉ? (പശു — പശുവാൻ, *paśuvāṇū*.) And what does എന്ത് do instead? (Nothing slides in — എന്താണ്.)

Chapter 99

Songs and Stories

Modes: 🗣️ voice (5) 🙌 Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name a song, singing, dance and a story.

From cold: the four arts words, and the three different things an ending does to the word in front of it.

99.1 പാട്ട് (pāṭṭu) — a song

Say *this is a good film*.

What to know first

പാട്ട് — pāṭṭu — a song.

ഇത് നല്ല പാട്ടാണ്. — *itū nalla pāṭṭāṇū* — “This is a good song.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

Listen to the join and you will hear nothing arrive. പാട്ട് ends in the breathed half-u, and the chapter before this one told you what those do when an ending comes: they step aside and let it land.

word	joined to ആണ്
നല്ലത്	നല്ലതാണ് (<i>nallatāṇū</i>)
പാട്ട്	പാട്ടാണ് (<i>pāṭṭāṇū</i>)

You have done this before without a new word to do it on.

നല്ലതാണ് has been in the book since the opinion chapter. പാട്ടാണ് is the same event on a word you met a moment ago — no യ, no വ, nothing inserted.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *pāṭṭũ*
- *itũ nalla pāṭṭāṇũ*
- *nallatāṇũ*, then *pāṭṭāṇũ*, and hear that neither gains a letter

Before you move on

What is *a song*? (പാട്ട്.) What slides in before ആണ്? (Nothing — പാട്ടാണ്.) And why not? (It ends in the half-u, not a full vowel.)

99.2 പാടുക (pāṭuka) — to sing

Say *a song*. Then say *to play*.

What to know first

പാടുക — *pāṭuka* — to sing.

ഞാൻ പാടുന്നു. — *ñān pāṭunnu* — “I sing.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

Last chapter the noun sat inside the verb. This pair is not built that way.

noun	verb
കളി	കളിക്കുക — the noun is there whole
പാട്ട്	പാടുക — the ട് thins to a single s

Say them one after the other and you will hear it: പാട്ട് holds the ട്

long, പാടുക does not.

Two words, one pattern between them — and that is all it is.

The book has put other nouns beside their verbs — വായന beside വായിക്കുക, ചോദ്യം beside ചോദിക്കുക — and not one of them does this. പാട്ട്/പാടുക is the only pair in the book where the consonant itself changes weight.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *pāṭuka*
- *ñān pāṭunnu*
- *pāṭṭū*, then *pāṭuka*, and hear the long *ṭ* shorten

Before you move on

What is *to sing*? (പാടുക.) What is *a song*? (പാട്ട്.) What happens to the *ṣ* in the verb? (**It thins to a single s.**)

99.3 നൃത്തം (nṛttam) — dance

Say *a song*. Then say *beautiful*.

What to know first

നൃത്തം — *nṛttam* — **dance**.

ഇത് നല്ല നൃത്തമാണ്. — *itṭ nalla nṛttamāṇṭ* — “This is a good dance.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

This is the third join, and the one the book explained to you first. നൃത്തം ends in the ം, and you have known since the good-and-bad chapter what that sign does when ആണ് arrives: it is already the **m**, and it takes the full letter **മ** so it can carry the vowel behind it.

word ends in	joined to ആണ്
the half-u	പാട്ടാണ് (<i>pāṭṭāṇṁ</i>)
ഃ	നൃത്തമാണ് (<i>nṛttamāṇṁ</i>)
Two words, two different endings, and neither one gains a sound. The first gives one up; the second only changes how its m is written.	

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *nṛttam*
- *itū nalla nṛttamāṇṁ*
- *pāṭṭāṇṁ*, then *nṛttamāṇṁ*

Before you move on

What is *dance*? (നൃത്തം.) What does its ഃ become before ആണ്? (മ — നൃത്തമാണ്.) And does the **m** sound change? (No — only its writing.)

99.4 കഥ (katha) — a story

Say *a film*. Then say *dance*.

What to know first

കഥ — *katha* — a story.

ഇത് നല്ല കഥയാണ്. — *itū nalla kathayāṇṁ* — “This is a good story.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

You have a word that ends exactly as this one does. കഥ’s last letter is ധ, carrying its own അ — and സിനിമ ends in അ too. So the same യ slides in:

ends in	word	joined to ആണ്
അ	സിനിമ	സിനിമയാണ് (<i>sinimayāṇũ</i>)
അ	കഥ	കഥയാണ് (<i>kathayāṇũ</i>)

That is the whole chapter in three words. പാട്ട് gives a sound up, നൃത്തം re-spells one, and കഥ takes a letter in — three endings, three outcomes, and you were told each one before you met the word it lands on.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *katha*
- *itũ nalla kathayāṇũ*
- *sinimayāṇũ*, then *kathayāṇũ*

Before you move on

What is *a story*? (കഥ.) കഥ ends in അ — what slides in before ആണ്? (യ — കഥയാണ്.) Which word you already had does the same? (സിനിമ — സിനിമയാണ്.)

99.5 (a song, singing, dance, a story) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say *a song, to sing, dance, a story*.

Grammar Lens: three endings, three different events

Five words met ആണ് in this chapter and the one before, and **the three endings did three different things**:

word	joined to ആണ്	what happened
പാട്ട്	പാട്ടാണ് (<i>pāṭṭāṇṁ</i>)	ends in the half-u — a sound is given up
നൃത്തം	നൃത്തമാണ് (<i>nṛttamāṇṁ</i>)	ends in ം — the m is re-spelled
കഥ	കഥയാണ് (<i>kathayāṇṁ</i>)	ends in അ — a യ is added
സിനിമ	സിനിമയാണ് (<i>sinimayāṇṁ</i>)	ends in അ — a യ is added
കളി	കളിയാണ് (<i>kaliyāṇṁ</i>)	ends in ഇ — a യ is added

Given up, re-spelled, added — three different events, and the only thing that tells you which you are looking at is **how the word ended**. Note the last two rows: അ and ഇ are different vowels and both call for യ, so it is the particular vowel that decides, not vowel-hood on its own.

What you've built

പാട്ട് is the song; പാടുക is doing it. Unlike കളി and കളിക്കുക, the noun is not sitting whole inside the verb — the long ṭṭ thins to a single ṭ:

ഞാൻ പാടുന്നു. — *ñān pāṭunnu* — I sing.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *pāṭṭū, pātuka, nṛttam, katha*
- *itū nalla pāṭṭāṇṁ*, then *itū nalla kathayāṇṁ*
- which of the four rows gives a sound up, and which adds one

Before you move on

A song, dance, a story? (പാട്ട്, നൃത്തം, കഥ.) Which of the three **gives a sound up** before ആണ്? (പാട്ട് — it ends in the half-u.) And which **adds** one? (കഥ — it ends in അ, so a യ comes in.)

Chapter 100

What You Wear

Modes: ⇨ voice (4) 👁 eyes (1) ⇨ Hands-free start: first 3 of 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name what someone is wearing, and call it new or old.

From cold: four things worn, two endings between them, and an adjective that has not moved since chapter 42.

100.1 മുണ്ട് (munṭu) — a mundu

Say the word for *cloth*. Then say *new*.

What to know first

മുണ്ട് — *munṭu* — a mundu, the length of cloth worn wrapped at the waist.

ഇത് പുതിയ മുണ്ടാണ്. — *itṭu putiya munṭāṇu* — “This is a new mundu.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

The book gave you the cloth before it gave you the garment.

തൂണി is the stuff; മുണ്ട് is the thing made of it and worn.

Two things in that sentence you already know how to do, and neither is new:

- പുതിയ sits in front and does not change — that is the whole adjective pattern from the chapter that taught it.

- മുണ്ട് ends in the breathed half-u, so ആണ് lands straight on it: മുണ്ടാണ്, nothing slid in — the same join പാട്ട് takes.

So the only new thing here is the word itself.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *munṭũ*
- *itũ putiya munṭāṇũ*
- *pāṭṭāṇũ*, then *munṭāṇũ*, and hear the same landing

Before you move on

What is a *mundu*? (മുണ്ട്.) Where does പുതിയ go, and does it change? (In front, and no.) What slides in before ആണ്? (Nothing — മുണ്ടാണ്.)

100.2 സാരി (sāri) — a sari

Say *a mundu*. Then say *old*.

What to know first

സാരി — *sāri* — a sari.

ഇത് പഴയ സാരിയാണ്. — *itũ palaya sāriyāṇũ* — “This is an old sari.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

Two garments, two different landings. മുണ്ട് ends in the half-u and takes ആണ് straight on. സാരി ends in ഇ, and you know what ഇ does:

word	joined to ആണ്
മുണ്ട്	മുണ്ടാണ് (<i>munṭāṇũ</i>)
സാരി	സാരിയാണ് (<i>sāriyāṇũ</i>)

The യ in സാരിയാണ് is the one കളി and ഭംഗി take, for the reason you were given then: ഇ calls for it. പഴയ behaves as പുതിയ did — in front, unchanged.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *sāri*
- *itū palaya sārīyāṇū*
- *muṇṭāṇū*, then *sārīyāṇū*, and hear which one gains a letter

Before you move on

What is *a sari*? (സാരി.) സാരി ends in ഇ — what slides in before ആണ്? (യ — സാരിയാണ്.) And മുണ്ട്? (Nothing — മുണ്ടാണ്.)

100.3 ചെരുപ്പ് (ceruppū) — a sandal

Say *a sari*. Then say *a mundu*.

What to know first

ചെരുപ്പ് — *ceruppū* — a sandal, the everyday open footwear.

ഇത് പഴയ ചെരുപ്പാണ്. — *itū palaya ceruppāṇū* — “This is an old sandal.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

This word is not a garment, and the book wants both. മുണ്ട് and സാരി go on the body; ചെരുപ്പ് goes on the feet. Its ending you have handled before, on എന്ത്, on നല്ലത്, on പാട്ട് and on മുണ്ട്. ചെരുപ്പ് finishes in the same breathed half-u, so ആണ് lands straight on it: ചെരുപ്പാണ്.

word	joined to ആണ്
മുണ്ട്	മുണ്ടാണ് (<i>munṭāṇū</i>)
ചെരുപ്പ്	ചെരുപ്പാണ് (<i>ceruppāṇū</i>)

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *ceruppū*
- *itū palaya ceruppāṇū*
- *munṭāṇū*, then *ceruppāṇū*

Before you move on

What is a *sandal*? (ചെരുപ്പ്.) What slides in before ആണ്?
(Nothing — ചെരുപ്പാണ്.) Which other word here does the same?
(മുണ്ട് — മുണ്ടാണ്.)

100.4 തൊപ്പി (toppi) — a cap

Say *a sandal*. Then say *new*.

What to know first

തൊപ്പി — *toppi* — a cap.

ഇത് പുതിയ തൊപ്പിയാണ്. — *itū putiya toppiyāṇū* — “This is a new cap.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

Four things worn, and only two endings between them.

തൊപ്പി ends in ഇ, so it joins the way സാരി does:

ends in	word	joined to ആണ്
half-u	മുണ്ട്	മുണ്ടാണ് (<i>munṭāṇṁ</i>)
half-u	ചെരുപ്പ്	ചെരുപ്പാണ് (<i>ceruppāṇṁ</i>)
ഇ	സാരി	സാരിയാണ് (<i>sāriyāṇṁ</i>)
ഇ	തൊപ്പി	തൊപ്പിയാണ് (<i>toppiyāṇṁ</i>)

Nothing in this chapter asked you to learn a join. Both are long-standing: എന്താണ് has taken the half-u since your very first question, and കുട്ടി has taken the യ since ഇത് എന്റെ കുട്ടിയാണ്. പാട്ട്, കളി and ഭംഗി are the most recent words to use them, not the words they began with. What the chapter gave you is four things to wear.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *toppi*
- *itū putiya toppiyāṇṁ*
- the four joined forms in the table, one after another

Before you move on

What is *a cap*? (തൊപ്പി.) തൊപ്പി ends in ഇ — what slides in before ആണ്? (യ — തൊപ്പിയാണ്.) Which other worn thing ends the same way? (സാരി.)

100.5 (a mundu, a sari, a sandal, a cap) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say *a mundu*, *a sari*, *a sandal*, *a cap*.

Grammar Lens: two endings, and an adjective that never moves

Four things to wear, and **between them only two endings**:

ends in	word	joined to ആണ്
half-u	മുണ്ട്	മുണ്ടാണ് (<i>munṭāṇũ</i>)
half-u	ചെരുപ്പ്	ചെരുപ്പാണ് (<i>ceruppāṇũ</i>)
ഇ	സാരി	സാരിയാണ് (<i>sāriyāṇũ</i>)
ഇ	തൊപ്പി	തൊപ്പിയാണ് (<i>toppiyāṇũ</i>)

Neither join was new, and neither is recent. എന്താണ് has taken the half-u since the book's first question, and കുട്ടി has taken the യ since ഇത് എന്റെ കുട്ടിയാണ് — long before പാട്ട്, കളി or ഭംഗി, which are only the latest words to use them. This chapter spent all four of its words on things, and none on grammar.

What you've built

ഇത് പുതിയ മുണ്ടാണ്. — *itũ putiya munṭāṇũ* — this is a new mundu.

ഇത് പഴയ സാരിയാണ്. — *itũ palaya sāriyāṇũ* — this is an old sari.

പുതിയ and പഴയ sit in front and do not change — the same shape they had in the chapter that taught them, with no ending added for the noun that follows.

And the cloth a മുണ്ട് is made of is തുണി, which the book gave you long before it gave you anything made from it.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *munṭũ, sāri, ceruppũ, toppi*
- *itũ putiya munṭāṇũ*, then *itũ palaya ceruppāṇũ*
- the word for the cloth a മുണ്ട് is made of

- which two of the four gain a യ, and what they end in

Before you move on

A mundu, a sari, a cap? (മുണ്ട്, സാരി, തൊപ്പി.) Which of the three takes **nothing** before ആണ്? (മുണ്ട് — it ends in the half-u.) And where does പുതിയ stand? (**In front, unchanged.**)

Chapter 101

Build and Height

Modes: ⇄ voice (5) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can describe a person as short, thin or stout, and say that someone is tall.

From cold: three adjectives that go in front of the noun, and one noun that cannot.

101.1 കുറിയ (kuriya) — short, of a person

Say *small*. Then say *he*.

What to know first

കുറിയ — *kuriya* — **short**, said of a person's height.

അവൻ കുറിയ കുട്ടിയാണ്. — *avan kuriya kutṭiyāṇu* — “He is a short child.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

Put it beside the word you already have and the shape is the **same**.

word	romanized
ചെറിയ	<i>ceṛiya</i>
കുറിയ	<i>kuriya</i>

Same റ, same -ിയ ending, same job in the sentence: in front of the noun, unchanged, exactly as the adjective chapter said.

What differs is the meaning, not the shape. ചെറിയ is *small* — little, not much of it. കുറിയ is *short* — not long, and of a person, not tall. A child can be ചെറിയ and a child can be കുറിയ, and those say two different things about the child.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *kuriya*
- *ceriya*, then *kuriya*, and hear how little separates them
- *avan kuriya kutṭiyāṇṣ*

Before you move on

What is *short*, of a person? (കുറിയ.) Which word you already had is built the same way? (ചെറിയ.) And where does it stand? (**In front of the noun, unchanged.**)

101.2 മെലിഞ്ഞ (meliñña) — thin

Say *short*, of a person. Where does it stand?

What to know first

മെലിഞ്ഞ — *meliñña* — **thin**, said of a person's build.

മെലിഞ്ഞ കുട്ടി — *meliñña kutṭi* — “a thin child.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

The ending is the constant; the shape in front of it never was. വലിയ, നല്ല, പുതിയ, പഴയ, ചെറിയ, and now കുറിയ — every adjective the book has put in front of a noun ends in **-a**, and so does this one. That is the whole requirement, and മെലിഞ്ഞ meets it. What comes in front of the **-a** has never been fixed. വലിയ, പുതിയ, ചെറിയ and കുറിയ end **-ിയ**, but നല്ല ends **-ല്ല** and പഴയ ends in a plain **-യ**. മെലിഞ്ഞ adds a doubled **ഞ്ഞ** to that list — a shape you

have had since പച്ച and മഞ്ഞ, back among the colours.

That changes nothing about how it is used — it still stands before the noun and still does not change:

കുറിയ കുട്ടി	<i>kuriya kuṭṭi</i>
മെലിഞ്ഞ കുട്ടി	<i>melinṇa kuṭṭi</i>

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *melinṇa*
- *melinṇa kuṭṭi*
- *kuriya kuṭṭi*, then *melinṇa kuṭṭi*

Before you move on

What is *thin*? (മെലിഞ്ഞ.) What do all the adjectives so far end in? (-a.) Does this one behave any differently? (**No** — in front, unchanged.)

101.3 തടിച്ച (taṭicca) — stout

Say *a thin child*.

What to know first

തടിച്ച — *taṭicca* — **stout, heavily built**.

തടിച്ച കുട്ടി — *taṭicca kuṭṭi* — “a stout child.”

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

This is the far end of the last word, and the book has done that before: one quality, then its opposite, so a single axis costs you two words and not four.

Three shapes, one ending, one behaviour:

adjective	ends
കുറിയ	-ിയ
മെലിഞ്ഞ	-ഞ്ഞ
തടിച്ച	-ച്ച

Every one of them closes on **-a**, stands in front of the noun, and does not change. **The shape in front of the -a varies and never matters** — as നല്ല and പഴയ were already showing you before this chapter began.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *taṭicca*
- *meliñña kutti*, then *taṭicca kutti*
- all three adjectives from this chapter in a row

Before you move on

What is *stout*? (തടിച്ച.) And its opposite? (മെലിഞ്ഞ.) What do the three shapes of this chapter have in common? (**They all end in -a and none of them changes.**)

101.4 ഉയരം (uyaram) — height

Say *short*, of a person. Then say the word for *there is*.

What to know first

ഉയരം — *uyaram* — height.

എനിക്ക് ഉയരമുണ്ട്. — *enikkū uyaramuṇṭū* — “To me, height exists” — I am tall.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

There is no single word for *tall* in this book, and this is how you say it anyway.

കുറിയ was an adjective, so it went in front of a noun. ഉയരം is not an adjective — it is a **noun**, *height* — so it takes the other machine you already own: the one where a thing **exists to someone**.

എനിക്ക് ഉയരമുണ്ട്. — *enikkū uyaramunṭū* — to-me
height there-is — *I am tall*.

That frame is not new. The chapter that gave you ഉണ്ട് used it to say that someone *has* a thing, and the chapter on എനിക്ക് gave you the person the having happens to. All this chapter does is put a new noun into it.

And the ം does here what it does **before ആണ്** — it takes the full letter മ so it can carry what follows: ഉയരം + ഉണ്ട് → ഉയരമുണ്ട്.

Do not read that as a rule about every ending. The chapter on easy and hard told you the ം does different things for different endings, and this chapter's own title proves it: ഉയരം + ഉം is ഉയരവും, with a വ.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *uyaram*
- *enikkū uyaramunṭū*
- why this one needs ഉണ്ട് and കുറിയ did not

Before you move on

What is *height*? (ഉയരം.) How do you say *I am tall*? (എനിക്ക് ഉയരമുണ്ട്.) And why not an adjective, as with കുറിയ?
(Because ഉയരം is a **noun** — it exists to someone.)

101.5 (short, thin, stout, and height) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say *short*, *thin*, *stout*, and *height*.

Grammar Lens: three of them go in front, and one cannot

Three of this chapter's four words are **adjectives**, and all three behave the way every adjective in the book has:

adjective	before the noun
കുറിയ	കുറിയ കുട്ടി (<i>kuriya kuṭṭi</i>)
മെലിഞ്ഞ	മെലിഞ്ഞ കുട്ടി (<i>meliñña kuṭṭi</i>)
തടിച്ച	തടിച്ച കുട്ടി (<i>taṭicca kuṭṭi</i>)

They end **-ിയ**, **-ഞ്ഞ** and **-ച്ച** — three different shapes, all closing on **-a**, none of them changing for the noun behind it.

ഉയരം is the odd one, and not because it is irregular. It is a **noun**, so there is nothing for it to stand in front of. It uses the frame you were given for *having*:

എനിക്ക് ഉയരമുണ്ട്. — *enikkũ uyaramunṭũ* — to-me
height there-is — *I am tall*.

What you've built

The book still has no single word for *tall*. It has a noun for height and a way to say that someone has it, and between them that is the whole meaning.

That is worth noticing rather than papering over: **ചെറിയ** and **കുറിയ** are almost the same word and do not mean the same thing — one is *small*, the other *short* — and *tall* is the mirror of neither. You reach it by another route.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *kuriya*, *meliñña*, *taṭicca*, *uyaram*
- *taṭicca kuṭṭi*, then *meliñña kuṭṭi*
- *enikkũ uyaramunṭũ*
- which of the four cannot stand in front of a noun, and why

Before you move on

Short, stout, height? (കുറിയ, തടിച്ച, ഉയരം.) Which of the three cannot go in front of a noun? (ഉയരം — it is a noun itself.) So how do you say *I am tall*? (എനിക്ക് ഉയരമുണ്ട്.)

Chapter 102

Saying When

Modes: ⇨ voice (4) 👁 eyes (1) ⇨ Hands-free start: first 3 of 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say that something happens on a named day or at a named hour, and ask what time it happens.

From cold: two answers to “when”, and which of the two takes an ending.

102.1 രണ്ട് മണിക്ക് — at two o’clock

Say *two o’clock*. Then say the ending you met as **to** and **for** — the one inside എനിക്ക്.

What to know first

രണ്ട് മണി *names* an hour. Add the dative and you are no longer naming it — you are putting something **at** it.

രണ്ട് മണി	<i>raṇṭṭu maṇi</i>	two o’clock
രണ്ട് മണിക്ക്	<i>raṇṭṭu maṇikkū</i>	at two o’clock

Nothing about the ending is new. You built this exact landing when you met your first case ending: ജോലി ends in the vowel sign ി, so it took ക്ക് and gave ജോലിക്ക്. മണി ends in that same vowel and takes that same ending, with the same visible seam — മണി plus ക്ക്.

Why it's said this way

That first case ending was glossed **to** and **for**, and English will not accept either one here: *to two o'clock* is not a thing anybody says. English reaches for a third word, **at**.

That is a fact about English, not about the ending. Malayalam has not switched cases on you — the suffix on മണിക്ക് is letter for letter the one you put on ജോലി. What has changed is the English word you need to translate it, and English has three of them where Malayalam has one ending. When you meet this ending on an hour, read it **at**.

Grammar Lens: the slot at the front

രണ്ട് മണിക്ക് ഞാൻ പോകും. — *raṇṭŭ maṇikkŭ ṇān pōkum* — “At two o'clock I will go.”

You know that slot already. നാളെ has stood in it in front of this very sentence. ഇന്ന് has stood in it too — in front of the same sentence with a *present* ending on the verb, because the day word and the verb ending have to agree. The front is a slot for saying **when**, and the verb at the back is what carries the tense.

What is new is the toll. ഇന്ന് walked into that slot wearing nothing. An hour has to put an ending on before it is allowed in.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *raṇṭŭ maṇi* — naming the hour
- *raṇṭŭ maṇikkŭ* — putting something at it
- *raṇṭŭ maṇikkŭ ṇān pōkum*
- which chapter you first built this ending on, and on which word

Before you move on

What is the difference between രണ്ട് മണി and രണ്ട് മണിക്ക്?
(The first names the hour; the second puts something at it.) Which ending did you add? (ക്ക് — your first case ending.)

Why does English need a different word here than it did for *to me*?
(English splits the job across *to*, *for* and *at*; Malayalam does not.)

102.2 തിങ്കളാഴ്ച ഞാൻ പോകും — on Monday I will go

Say the day-name for Monday. Then say *at two o'clock*.

What to know first

The day-name lesson laid all seven of them out in a table and left them there. You have read തിങ്കളാഴ്ച and never once *used* it. Use it now:

തിങ്കളാഴ്ച ഞാൻ പോകും. — *tiṅkaḷāḷca ṇān pōkum* — “On Monday I will go.”

Read that sentence twice and look for the ending. There is none. The day-name went into the when-slot exactly as it stands in that table, with nothing added to the front of it and nothing added to the back.

Grammar Lens: two words, one slot, one ending between them

Put the last lesson’s sentence beside this one and the difference is the whole point of the chapter:

രണ്ട് മണിക്ക്	<i>raṇṭṭu maṇikkū...</i>	the hour took ക്ക്
ഞാൻ പോകും		
തിങ്കളാഴ്ച ഞാൻ പോകും	<i>tiṅkaḷāḷca...</i>	the day took nothing

Both sentences answer **when**. Both put their answer at the front. One of the two answers had to put an ending on first, and it is the hour.

Why it’s said this way

The day-name is in good company. ഇന്ന് and നാളെ stand in that same slot bare, and have since the lesson that first stood a day word in front of a whole sentence. A named day behaves like *today* and *tomorrow*, not like a clock time.

So the line you can rely on, for what this book has taught you, runs between **the named day** and **the named hour** — and it is the hour that is the odd one. That is a description of what Malayalam does here, not a law with no exceptions: a day-name can take endings for other jobs. For saying **when** something happens, it does not need one.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *tiṅkaḷāḷca*
- *tiṅkaḷāḷca ṇān pōkum*
- *raṇṭṭu maṇikkū ṇān pōkum*, then the Monday line again
- which of the two answers carried an ending, and which carried none

Before you move on

What do you add to തിങ്കളാഴ്ച to say *on Monday*? (**Nothing.**)
 What do you add to രണ്ട് മണി to say *at two*? (**ക്ക്.**) Which two day words stand in that slot bare, the way the day-name does? (**ഇന്ന്** and **നാളെ.**)

102.3 എത്ര മണിക്ക് — asking at which hour

Ask what hour it is — you have been able to since you learned the verb for asking. Then say *at two o'clock*.

What to know first

എത്ര മണി is already yours. The lesson that gave you the verb for *asking* put *etra maṇi* — **what hour** — in your mouth and drilled it. **This lesson is one ending away from it.**

എത്ര മണി	<i>etra maṇi</i>	what time is it
എത്ര മണിക്ക്	<i>etra maṇikkū</i>	at what time

The first asks somebody to **name** the hour. The second asks **at which** hour a thing will happen. That is the whole distance between them, and it is the same **ക്ക്** you put on the hour at the start of this chapter.

Grammar Lens: which word wears the ending

എത്ര never changes. Every time you have used it, it has stood in front of a bare noun — എത്ര ദൂരം (*etra dūram*, how far), എത്ര രൂപ (*etra rūpa*, how many rupees).

Put a hand over the question word in those two and what is left is a **distance** and a **rupee**, standing bare. Do it to എത്ര മണിക്കൂ and what is left is an hour **with an ending on it**. The ending is the one thing here the question word did not bring.

Why it's said this way

The answer comes back wearing the same ending:

— എത്ര മണിക്കൂ? — *etra maṇikkū?* — രണ്ട് മണിക്കൂ.
— *raṇṭū maṇikkū.*

That is worth listening for. A day-name would not do this, because for saying **when** it does not take the ending in the first place — so there is nothing for it to give back.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *etra maṇi?*, then *etra maṇikkū?* — and name the difference
- the question, then answer it — *etra maṇikkū?* *raṇṭū maṇikkū.*
- *etra dūram*, *etra rūpa*, *etra maṇikkū*
- which word in the question carries the ending, and which does not

Before you move on

How do you ask *at what time?* (എത്ര മണിക്കൂ.) What does the same question *without* the ending ask? (**What time is it** — and you have had that one for a long while.) What does the answer wear? (**The same ending** — രണ്ട് മണിക്കൂ.)

102.4 തിങ്കളാഴ്ച രണ്ട് മണിക്ക് — on Monday at two o'clock

Say *on Monday*. Say *at two o'clock*. Now say them one after the other, without stopping.

What to know first

You have two answers to **when**, and real arrangements usually need both:

തിങ്കളാഴ്ച രണ്ട് മണിക്ക് ഞാൻ പോകും. *tiṅkaḷaḷca raṇṭṭu maṇikkū ñān pōkuni* “On Monday at two o'clock I will go.”

Neither piece changed to make room for the other. The day-name is the bare word from the table where you met all seven. The hour is the dative you built at the start of this chapter. They stand side by side in the one slot at the front, and the sentence behind them is untouched.

Grammar Lens: wider first

The order is not free, and it is the order you would guess: **the wider container goes first**. A Monday holds a two o'clock; a two o'clock does not hold a Monday.

day, then hour

what English does

തിങ്കളാഴ്ച രണ്ട് മണിക്ക്

on Monday at two

English arranges it the same way, which here is a genuine convenience rather than a trap — you can carry your instinct straight across.

What you've built

Count what this chapter actually added: **one ending, on one kind of word**.

Everything else was already yours — the word that names an hour, the table of day-names, the question word you have asked ages and distances and prices with, and the slot at the front that *today* and *tomorrow* stand in. What was missing was never vocabulary. It was the joint, and the joint is **ക്ക്** on the hour and nothing at all on the day.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *tinkalālca raṇṭṭu maṇikkū*
- the whole sentence — ...*ñān pōkum*
- *etra maṇikkū?* and answer it with the hour from that sentence
- which of the two front words carries an ending, and why the other does not

Before you move on

Which comes first, the day or the hour? (**The day** — the wider one.) Which of the two carries an ending? (**The hour.**) What did this chapter add that you did not already own? (**One ending on one kind of word** — the rest was already yours.)

102.5 (on Monday, at two o'clock, at what time?) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say *on Monday, at two o'clock*, and *at what time?*

Grammar Lens: one of them takes an ending

Two answers to the same question, and only one of them is dressed:

തിങ്കളാഴ്ച	<i>tinkalālca</i>	on Monday — bare
രണ്ട് മണിക്ക്	<i>raṇṭṭu maṇikkū</i>	at two o'clock — ക്ക്

If you can remember which one is which, you have the chapter. The day-name stands in the when-slot the way ഇന്ന് and നാളെ have stood there since a day word first went in front of a whole sentence. The hour does not; it takes the dative first.

What you've built

No word in this chapter was new. That is unusual enough to say out loud. The hour came from the lesson that named it, the day-names from their table, the question word from the day you asked somebody their age, and the ending itself from your first case ending — where it meant *to* and *for* and landed on ജോലി exactly as it now lands on മണി.

What you could not do before was **fix an arrangement in time** — and what was missing was one joint, not a vocabulary list.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *tiṅkaḷālca*, then *raṇṭṭu maṇikkū*
- *etra maṇikkū?* and answer it
- *tiṅkaḷālca raṇṭṭu maṇikkū ṇān pōkum*
- the two day words that behave like the day-name

Before you move on

On Monday? (തിങ്കളാഴ്ച — nothing added.) *At two o'clock?* (രണ്ട് മണിക്ക്.) *At what time?* (എത്ര മണിക്ക്.) Which comes first when you say both? (**The day.**)

Chapter 103

School

Modes: 🗣️ voice (5) ✍️ pen (1) 🗣️ Hands-free start: first 1 of 6 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name a school and what happens in it — the lesson, the exam, and the marks.

From cold: four school words, the three places they came from, and which one changes under a case ending.

103.1 പള്ളിക്കൂടം — a school

Say *a teacher*. Say *a student*. You have had both of them for a long while, and never once had the building they are standing in.

What to know first

പള്ളിക്കൂടം (*pallikkūṭam*) — a school.

It is a long word, and it is long because it is **two words**. The first, *palli*, is what Malayalam **now** calls a **mosque or a church**. The second, *kūṭam*, is a **hall** — in the older sense this compound keeps; standing on its own today the word will more often mean something else entirely.

Neither part is a word this book has taught you, and they are given here in sound only, for the shape of the thing.

Why it's said this way

The traditional account is that teaching happened where the community already gathered: the hall stood beside the place of

worship, and that is where children were taught long before anybody built a separate building for it.

It is worth knowing that this is an account and not a settled fact. *palli* also named the Buddhist and Jain teaching-houses of early Kerala, older than either of the meanings the word carries today, and that is at least as likely a route to the school sense. What is not in doubt is the shape: a school is named with two older words joined.

Kerala has a second word too, borrowed straight from English and heard constantly. This one is the native compound, and it is the one that tells you something.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *pallikkūṭani*, slowly — *palli* ... *kūṭani*
- the two words it is made of, and what each one means
- the teacher, the student, and the building

Before you move on

A school? (പള്ളിക്കൂടം.) What are the two words inside it? (*palli*, a place of worship, and *kūṭani*, a hall.) Who is in it that you could already name? (അധ്യാപകൻ and വിദ്യാർത്ഥി.)

103.2 O — one character, met with the word that needs it

Before the new one: **S** — say its sound, with the tongue curled back.

One character this time. One only. It arrives with the word on the next page.

Script you'll notice: **O**

O — *tha*.

It is **S** with a breath after it. The tongue does exactly what it did for **S** — curled back, touching the roof of the mouth — and then the release carries a puff of air out with it.

Malayalam pairs its **stops** this way — ക/ഖ, ത/ഥ, ട/ഠ — a plain one and a breathed one beside it. The nasals and the liquids have no such partner: there is no breathed ണ and no breathed ല.

It has not been on a page yet: it arrives with the word on the next one.

Writing: **O** — copy what you see

Put your pen on **O** and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these two, and say which one carries the breath

S · O

- *Trace it:* **O** three times, saying *tha* as you finish each one
- *Say it:* *ta*, then *tha* — the same tongue, one with a puff of air

Before you move on

Which character is this — **O**? What sound does it carry? (*tha*.)
Which letter is it the breathed partner of? (**S**.)

103.3 പഠിക്കൂ — a lesson

Say *a school*. Then say what happens to -ഃ when a case ending is added to the word.

What to know first

പാഠം (*pāṭham*) — **a lesson**, the kind a school gives you: a chapter of a book, a thing to be learned.

The Sanskrit it comes from means **a recitation** — a saying-aloud. The lesson was named for the **saying**, not for the page it is written on, which is worth knowing about a word you are about to say aloud.

Grammar Lens: you already know what it will do

പാഠം ends in -ഃ, and that tells you something before you are taught it. When a **case ending** is added, the -ഃ gives way to -ത്ത-:

പാഠം → പാഠത്തിൽ (*pāṭhattil*) — *in the lesson*

That is the same rule, unchanged, that the state name and the book followed. You are not learning a new behaviour; you are meeting a new word that already belongs to a family you know.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *pāṭham*
- *pāṭham*, then *pāṭhattil* — and name what changed
- what the Sanskrit behind it means

Before you move on

A lesson? (പാഠം.) What does its -ഃ become when a case ending is added? (-ത്ത- — പാഠത്തിൽ.) What did the Sanskrit word behind it mean? (**A recitation.**)

103.4 പരീക്ഷ — an exam

Say *a lesson*. Then say the apology you have had since early on — and listen for the ക്ഷ that opens it.

What to know first

പരീക്ഷ (parīkṣa) — an exam.

You can already write the hard part. The ക്ഷ is not a new shape — but look at **where it sits**. It **opens** that apology, and here it **closes** the word.

You have seen it close a word before: അപേക്ഷ, the request, ends in exactly this.

The Sanskrit behind it is *pari-* (**around**) plus a root meaning **to look**. An examination is a **looking all around** something.

Grammar Lens: this one does not end in -ഃ

The word before this one ended in -ഃ and told you what it would do. This one ends in അ, and it does not join the same family:

പാഠം	<i>pāṭham</i>	ends in -ഃ
പരീക്ഷ	<i>parīkṣa</i>	ends in അ

Two words from the same chapter, in the same subject, behaving differently. That is worth noticing rather than smoothing over: what a Malayalam word does when something attaches to it is decided by **how it ends**, not by what it means.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *parīkṣa*
- the apology, then the exam — the same shape, at opposite ends
- *pāṭham*, then *parīkṣa*, and how each one ends

Before you move on

An exam? (പരീക്ഷ.) Which earlier word **ends** the same way? (അപേക്ഷ.) Which one **opens** with that shape? (ക്ഷമിക്കണം.) Which of this chapter's two words ends in -ഃ? (പാഠം — not പരീക്ഷ.)

103.5 മാർക്ക് — marks

Say *an exam*. Then count in tens — you will want the numbers in a moment.

What to know first

മാർക്ക് (*mārkku*) — **marks**, what an exam gives back to you.

Say it out loud and you will hear English. It is the English word *mark*, borrowed whole. Kerala's schools took the English examination system and the English word along with it, and this is the word people reach for.

Grammar Lens: what the borrowing had to change

The word is English, and the **spelling is not**. Two things happened to it on the way in, and you can see both:

- the **ർ** before a doubled **ക്ക** — the shape you have read in ശർക്കര and ചേർക്കുക;
- the **half-u** at the end, the faint vowel that closes so many Malayalam words and that English *mark* does not have at all.

A borrowed word does not stay foreign. It is made to end the way Malayalam words end, and then it behaves like one.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *mārkku*, and hear the English inside it
- *parīkṣa*, then *mārkku* — the exam, then what it gives back
- a number in tens, then *mārkku*

Before you move on

Marks? (മാർക്ക്.) Where does the word come from? (**English** — *mark*.) What two things did Malayalam do to its spelling? (**The chillu റ്** before the doubled **ക്ക**, and the **half-u** at the end.)

103.6 (school, lesson, exam, marks) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say *school, lesson, exam* and *marks*.

Grammar Lens: four words, three different arrivals

One small corner of one subject, and the words in it arrived three different ways:

പള്ളിക്കൂടം	<i>paḷḷikkūṭam</i>	assembled here, from two older words
പാഠം, പരീക്ഷ	<i>pāṭham, parīkṣa</i>	Sanskrit , taken whole
മാർക്ക്	<i>mārkkū</i>	English , taken whole

That is what a school vocabulary looks like in Malayalam, and it is not untidy — it is a record. The building's name was **built** here out of older parts; the scholarly words came in **whole** with the scholarly tradition; and the examination system arrived with its own word attached.

What you've built

You had the people before you had the place. The teacher and the student have been yours for a long while with nothing around them; now there is a building, a thing taught in it, a test of the thing, and a number at the end.

And the two Sanskrit words do **not** behave alike:

പാഠം	പാഠത്തിൽ	the -ഃ gives way to -ത്ത-
പരീക്ഷ	പരീക്ഷയിൽ	അ takes the -യ- join

Both change. They change differently, and each one the way its ending says — the -യ- join is the one ഇന്ത്യ already showed you. Same subject, same source language; the ending decides, not the meaning.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *pallikkūṭam*, *pāṭham*, *parīkṣa*, *mārkkū*
- which of the four is English, and which two are Sanskrit
- *pāṭham*, then *pāṭhattil*; *parīkṣa*, then *parīkṣayil*
- the teacher and the student, now inside the building

Before you move on

School, exam, marks? (പള്ളിക്കൂടം, പരീക്ഷ, മാർക്ക്.) Which one is English? (മാർക്ക്.) Which word loses its ending to -ത്ത-? (പാഠം → പാഠത്തിൽ.) And what does പരീക്ഷ do instead? (പരീക്ഷയിൽ — the -യ- join.)

Chapter 104

One Present, Two Englishes

Modes: ⇐ voice (4) 👁 eyes (1) ⇐ Hands-free start: first 4 of 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say what I am doing right now, and ask somebody when they are coming.

From cold: the one present form, the word that pins it to this moment, and the helper Malayalam does not have.

104.1 ഞാൻ പോകുന്നു — I go, and I am going

Say *I go*. Then say it for *you* and for *they* — and notice that the verb did not move.

What to know first

You were told that Malayalam's present tense is **one word for everybody**. Here is the part that was not said:

It is also one word for two English tenses.

ഞാൻ പോകുന്നു	<i>ñān pōkunnū</i>	I go
ഞാൻ പോകുന്നു	<i>ñān pōkunnū</i>	I am going

Those are the **same** Malayalam sentence, written twice. English asks you to choose — *I go to work* against *I am going to work* — and the choice does not exist here. There is nothing to get right.

Why it's said this way

English is the one doing something extra here. It splits its present into a habitual and an ongoing form; Malayalam does not. The ending **-ഉന്നു** covers what you do every day and what you are doing at this moment, and a listener takes whichever the situation offers.

This is not a gap in Malayalam. When it matters which you mean, there is a way to say so — and the one this book gives you is a word in front, not a change to the verb. That is the next lesson.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *ñān pōkunnu* — and mean *I go*
- *ñān pōkunnu* again — and mean *I am going*
- the same for *to come* — *ñān varunnu*
- what English makes you choose that Malayalam does not

Before you move on

How do you say *I go*? (ഞാൻ പോകുന്നു.) How do you say *I am going*? (**The same** — ഞാൻ പോകുന്നു.) Which language is doing the extra work here? (**English** — it splits a present that Malayalam keeps whole.)

104.2 ഇപ്പോൾ ഞാൻ പോകുന്നു — right now, I am going

Say *I am going*. Then say the word for **now**.

What to know first

The last lesson left one thing open: if ഞാൻ പോകുന്നു can mean either, how do you say you mean **this moment**?

You put the moment in front of it.

ഇപ്പോൾ ഞാൻ പോകുന്നു. — *ippōḷ ñān pōkunnu* — “**Right now** I am going.”

The verb did not change. Not one letter of it. What changed is that a word naming the moment is standing at the front, and it is a word you have owned for a long while.

Grammar Lens: the slot again

That front position is not new either. ഇന്ന് has stood there, and നാളെ, and a named day, and an hour with an ending on it. ഇപ്പോൾ is the same slot doing the narrowest version of its job: not today, not this Monday — *now*.

This is how Malayalam answers a question English answers with the verb. English changes *go* into *am going*. Malayalam leaves the verb alone and adds a word — and a word is easier than a form.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *ñān pōkunnu*, then *ippōḷ ñān pōkunnu*
- the same with *to come* — *ippōḷ ñān varunnu*
- which part of the sentence changed, and which did not

Before you move on

How do you say *right now I am going*? (ഇപ്പോൾ ഞാൻ പോകുന്നു.) What happened to the verb? (**Nothing** — it is unchanged.) Where did ഇപ്പോൾ go? (**At the front**, in the slot that says *when*.)

104.3 ഇപ്പോൾ ഞാൻ വരുന്നു — and there is no word for *am*

Say *to come*. Then say *right now I am going*.

What to know first

Take a second verb through it and watch nothing bend:

ഇപ്പോൾ ഞാൻ വരുന്നു. — *ippōḷ ñān varunnu* — “Right now I am coming.”

You have said that verb before. *varunnu* was in the tense table you were given for *varuka*, and you drilled it there beside *vannu* and *varunĭ*. What is new is not the word — it is that it does the same double duty പോകുന്നു does.

Grammar Lens: the word you must not reach for

English says *I am going*, in two words. When you go looking for the Malayalam word to put where *am* is, you will find ആണ് — the copula you were given early on for *is*, and which you have since heard carrying *am* as well.

Do not put it here.

ഇപ്പോൾ ഞാൻ വരുന്നു is right: one verb, nothing added. Putting a copula in the middle of it — *ippōḷ ñān āṇṁ varunnu* — **is**

ungrammatical, and it is written here in sound only, so that the shape never sits on the page looking like Malayalam you could copy.

ആണ് joins a thing to what it *is* — a name, a description. That is its whole job, and propping up another verb is not part of it. The whole of *am going* already lives inside വരുന്നു; there is no second word for it to be.

Malayalam does put verbs together in other places — you have met ഉണ്ട് and കഴിയും doing exactly that. This is not one of those places, and ആണ് is not one of those verbs.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *ippōḷ ñān varunnu*
- *ippōḷ ñān pōkunnu*, then the coming one again
- where English puts *am*, and what Malayalam puts there instead

Before you move on

Right now I am coming? (ഇപ്പോൾ ഞാൻ വരുന്നു.) How many words carry *am coming*? (**One** — വരുന്നു.) Does ആണ് belong in that sentence? (**No** — it joins a thing to what it is; it does not help another verb.)

104.4 നിങ്ങൾ എപ്പോൾ പോകും? — asked long ago, answered now

Say *now*, *then*, and *when?* — the three you were given as a set.

What to know first

Nothing about this pair is new to you. You were taught the three beginnings as a system — ഇ- near, അ- far, എ- a question — and then handed this row of it whole:

ഇപ്പോൾ	<i>ippōl</i>	now
അപ്പോൾ	<i>appōl</i>	then
എപ്പോൾ	<i>eppōl</i>	when?

What is new is the answer. You were given the question നിങ്ങൾ എപ്പോൾ പോകും? with a **future** on the end of it, and no way to reply except with another future.

Your turn

Now you can answer it with **this moment** instead:

— നിങ്ങൾ എപ്പോൾ പോകും? — *ninnīḷ eppōḷ pōkum?* —
 “When will you go?” — ഇപ്പോൾ ഞാൻ പോകുന്നു. — *ippōḷ ṇān pōkunnu.* — “I’m going right now.”

Say these aloud:

- the question — *ninnīḷ eppōḷ pōkum?*
- the answer — *ippōḷ ṇān pōkunnu*
- the same exchange with *to come* — answer *ippōḷ ṇān varunnu*
- which word in your answer says *this moment*

What you’ve built

The question was asked in the future and answered in the present, and that is not a mismatch — it is the ordinary way to say you are on your way. The question asks about a plan; the answer says the plan is happening now.

And the answer needs **one** verb to do it. No word went in where English puts *am*.

Before you move on

When? (എപ്പോൾ.) Its two partners? (ഇപ്പോൾ *now*, അപ്പോൾ *then*.) Answer നിങ്ങൾ എപ്പോൾ പോകും? with this moment. (ഇപ്പോൾ ഞാൻ പോകുന്നു.)

104.5 (I go, I am going, right now) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say *I go*, then *I am going*, then *right now I am going*.

Grammar Lens: one form, and a word in front of it

ഞാൻ പോകുന്നു	<i>ñān pōkunnu</i>	I go and I am going
ഇപ്പോൾ ഞാൻ പോകുന്നു	<i>ippōl ñān pōkunnu</i>	right now I am going

The verb is the same in both rows. That is the whole chapter in one column. Where English changes *go* to *am going* and then adds *right now*, Malayalam never touches the verb at all — it puts a word in the slot at the front, the same slot that has held *today*, *tomorrow*, a named day and a named hour.

What you've built

Not one word in this chapter was new. The verb ending was named for you long ago; ഇപ്പോൾ and എപ്പോൾ have both been yours for chapters. What you did not have was permission to use one form for two English tenses, and the warning that goes with it.

That warning is worth keeping. English's *am* has no home in ഇപ്പോൾ ഞാൻ വരുന്നു. ആണ് exists, and it joins a thing to what it *is*. Propping up another verb is not its job — and the *am going* is already inside വരുന്നു, so there is nothing left for a second word to carry.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *ñān pōkunnu*, meaning each of the two English sentences in turn
- *ippōl̥ ñān varunnu*
- *eppōl̥*, then answer it
- where *am* goes in Malayalam

Before you move on

Two English sentences, one Malayalam one — which? (*I go* and *I am going*, both ഞാൻ പോകുന്നു.) How do you pin it to this moment? (ഇപ്പോൾ, at the front.) Where does *am* go? (**Nowhere** — it is inside the verb.)

Chapter 105

Places

Modes: 🗣️ voice (4) 🗣️ Hands-free start: all 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name a country, a town, a city and a capital, and say what kind of place Kerala and India are.

From cold: the scale of places, and the one word on it that does not sort by size.

105.1 രാജ്യം — a country

Say ഇന്ത്യ. Say കേരളം. Then say നാട് — the word that can stretch from a home region all the way up to a country.

What to know first

രാജ്യം (*rājyam*) — a country.

ഇന്ത്യ is one. കേരളം is not — it is a part of one.

നാട് could not tell you that. It covers a home region, a district or a country, and the situation decides which — so it can name the thing without fixing its size. രാജ്യം fixes it. That is the whole of what this word adds.

Why it's said this way

The Sanskrit behind it means **a realm**, and it is built on the word for a **king**. What the word names is **kingship** — rule as an institution — not the land, the people or the borders.

It ends in -ഃ, which by now tells you what it will do when a case ending arrives.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *rājyam*
- *nāṭṭ*, then *rājyam* — the word that floats, then the one that does not
- what the Sanskrit behind it is built on

Before you move on

A country? (രാജ്യം.) What could നാട് not do that this word does? (Fix the size — നാട് floats.) What is the word built on? (The word for a king.)

105.2 നഗരം — a city

Say *a country*. Then say the word you were given for a settled place somebody is from.

What to know first

നഗരം (*nagaram*) — a city.

രാജ്യം	<i>rājyam</i>	a country
നഗരം	<i>nagaram</i>	a city
ഉറൂർ	<i>ūrū</i>	a town, a settled place — yours already

Why it's said this way

These two are not a big one and a small one, and it is worth saying so rather than teaching you a rule that Malayalam does not keep.

നഗരം is the word in ordinary modern use. It is what a newspaper prints and what a speaker reaches for when naming a city. ഉറൂർ is older, and its own lesson told you where it mostly lives now: **buried in place-names the length of the south**, and in talk of the settled place somebody is *from*.

So the difference is not a line on a map. നഗരം is what you say about

a city today; ഉറൂർ is the old word, still alive in names and in speaking of where somebody belongs.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *nagarami*
- the three in order — *rājyami*, *nagarami*, *ūrū*
- which of the two is the word in ordinary use today, and where the other one mostly survives

Before you move on

A city? (നഗരം.) Which of the two is the word in ordinary use today? (നഗരം.) Where does ഉറൂർ mostly survive? (In **place-names**, and in speaking of where somebody is from.)

105.3 തലസ്ഥാനം — a capital

Say *a city*. Then say the word for the part of your body that sits on top.

What to know first

തലസ്ഥാനം (*talasthānam*) — a capital.

It opens with a word you already have. The head you learned among the body parts, തല — this book wrote it *thala* there and writes it *ta-* here, which is the same word and two spellings of the same first letter. The second half, *sthānam*, is a **place**, and it is given in sound only because this book has not taught it as a word of its own.

A capital is a **head-place**.

Why it's said this way

English says exactly the same thing, and hides it. *Capital* comes from Latin *caput* — **head**. Two languages, two roots, one idea: the city at the top of the body. Malayalam keeps the head visible. തല is right there at the front of

the word every time you say it; an English speaker has to be told.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *talasthānamī*, slowly — the head, then *sthānamī*
- the body part hiding at the front of it
- *nagaramī*, then *talasthānamī* — a city, then the head one

Before you move on

A capital? (തലസ്ഥാനം.) What are its two halves? (തല, the **head**, and *sthānamī*, a **place**.) What does the English word hide that the Malayalam one shows? (**The same head** — Latin *caput*.)

105.4 (country, city, capital) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say *country*, *city* and *capital*.

Grammar Lens: a scale, and one word that is not on it

രാജ്യം	<i>rājyaṇī</i>	a country
നഗരം	<i>nagaraṇī</i>	a city
ഉറൂർ	<i>ūrū</i>	a town, a settled place — yours long before this chapter
തലസ്ഥാനം	<i>talasthānaṇī</i>	a capital

The last one is not a size at all. A capital is a city picked out by what happens in it, and it can be large or small.

And the middle two are not a clean pair of sizes either — you were told that നഗരം is the word in ordinary use for a city today, while ഉറൂർ is the older one, surviving in place-names and in speaking of where somebody is from. Only രാജ്യം sits unambiguously at the top.

What you've built

You could name the places before you could say what kind of thing they were. കേരളം and ഇന്ത്യ have been yours for a long while. ഉറു gave you the settled end of the scale, and നാട് gave you a word that floats over everything from a home region to a country.

What was missing was a word that does **not** float, the ordinary modern word for a city, and the capital.

And one of the four was half-built already: തലസ്ഥാനം opens with *tala*, the **head** you learned among the body parts. The word was waiting on a piece you had.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *rājyaṁ, nagaraṁ, ūrū, talasthānaṁ*
- which one is picked out by what happens in it, not by its size
- which one is the old word that survives in place-names
- *indya*, then what kind of thing it is

Before you move on

Country, city, capital? (രാജ്യം, നഗരം, തലസ്ഥാനം.) Which one is picked out by what happens in it? (തലസ്ഥാനം.) What is hiding at the front of it? (തല, the **head**.)

Chapter 106

Before and After

Modes: ⇄ voice (4) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say that something happens before or after a named time or a named event.

From cold: the two words that order events, and the ending they both lean on.

106.1 മുൻപ് — before

Say *at two o'clock*. Then say the word you have for **then** — the one that puts one turn after another.

What to know first

മുൻപ് (*munpŭ*) — **before**.

It goes after. English puts *before* in front of what it is before; Malayalam puts it behind:

രണ്ട് മണിക്ക് മുൻപ് — *raṇṭŭ maṇikkŭ munpŭ* — “**before** two o'clock.”

Read the two **phrases** right to left and they come out as English: *before* — *two o'clock*. Keep രണ്ട് മണി together as one piece.

Why it's said this way

Look at what it is standing on. മണിക്കൂർ — the hour with the dative on it, exactly as you built it. മുൻപ് does not attach to the word and does not change it. It is a separate word that leans on an ending you already make.

The word itself is built on **mun**, the old Dravidian word for the **front**. What is in front of you in space became what is in front of you in time.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *munpŭ*
- *raṇṭŭ maṇikkŭ munpŭ*
- which word carries the ending, and which one leans on it

Before you move on

Before two o'clock? (രണ്ട് മണിക്കൂർ മുൻപ്.) Where does മുൻപ് stand — in front of the hour or after it? (**After it.**) What is it built on? (**mun**, the word for the **front**.)

106.2 ശേഷം — after

Say *before two o'clock*. Then say the word for the meal.

What to know first

ശേഷം (*śēṣam*) — **after**.

It stands where മുൻപ് stands, on the same kind of ending:

ഉണിന് ശേഷം — *uṇinŭ śēṣam* — “**after** the meal.”

Grammar Lens: the same case, wearing its other shape

ഉണിന് is the dative again — and it is the **other** of the two shapes you were given. You were told the choice is made by the sound the word finishes on, and here is the part of that you can use: a word

ending in a **consonant** takes -ിന്. ഉൗൺ ends in ണ്, so -ിന് it is.
The hour ended in a vowel and took -ക്ക്.

രണ്ടു മണിക്കൂർ	<i>raṇṭu maṇikkū munpū</i>	before two o'clock
മുൻപ്		
ഉൗണിന് ശേഷം	<i>ūṇinū śēṣaṇi</i>	after the meal

Same case, two shapes, and both of these words lean on it.

You are not learning a new piece of machinery — you are hanging two more words on a piece you have had since your first case ending.

Why it's said this way

ശേഷം is Sanskrit, and its plain meaning is **the remainder** — what is left over. *After the meal* is, in the word's own terms, **what is left of the day once the meal is done.**

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *śēṣaṇi*
- *ūṇinū śēṣaṇi*
- *raṇṭu maṇikkū munpū*, then *ūṇinū śēṣaṇi* — and name the two shapes of the one ending

Before you move on

After the meal? (ഉൗണിന് ശേഷം.) Which two shapes of the dative did this chapter use? (-ക്ക് on the hour, -ിന് on the meal.) What does ശേഷം plainly mean? (**The remainder** — what is left over.)

106.3 ആദ്യം, പിന്നെ, മുൻപ്, ശേഷം — ordering a run, and ordering against a point

Say *at first*. Say *then*. You have had both for a long while.

What to know first

You now have four words about order, and they split into **two pairs that do different jobs** — though not the job you might expect.

ആദ്യം, പിന്നെ	<i>ādyam, pinne</i>	order a run of things
മുൻപ്, ശേഷം	<i>munpŭ, śēṣam</i>	order one thing against a named point

Both pairs order real events. You were shown ആദ്യം ഉണ്, പിന്നെ ചായ — lunch first, then tea — and that is the world being ordered, not a story about it.

What the first pair cannot do is name what it is measuring against. It lays things out in a run: this, then that. മുൻപ് and ശേഷം do something the other pair has no way to do — they take a **named** time or event and place something relative to it.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *ādyam*, then *pinne* — laying a run out in order
- *raṇṭŭ maṇikkŭ munpŭ* — ordering an event against an hour
- *uṇinŭ śēṣam* — ordering an event against a meal
- which two of the four need a named thing to measure against

What you've built

Until this chapter you could put events in a run and not anchor them. *First lunch, then tea* says which came first and says nothing about when either happened. *Before two o'clock* and *after the meal* fix an event against a point you have **named**.

That is the whole of what the two new words add — and neither of them needed a new piece of grammar to do it.

Before you move on

Which two lay a run out in order? (ആദ്യം and പിന്നെ.) Which two measure against a named point? (മുൻപ് and ശേഷം.) In this

chapter, what did that named thing wear? (**The dative.**)

106.4 (before, after) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say *before* and *after*.

Grammar Lens: both of them lean, and neither of them attaches

രണ്ടു മണിക്കൂർ മുൻപ്	<i>raṇṭṭu maṇikkū munpŭ</i>	before two o'clock
ഉണിന് ശേഷം	<i>uṇinŭ śēṣani</i>	after the meal

Neither word joined onto the word in front of it. They stay separate words — but they are not passengers: it is ശേഷം that puts ഉണി into the dative in the first place. The hour was already going to wear that ending; the meal wears it because the postposition asks for it. Both stand **behind** what they are about, which is the opposite of where English puts them.

What you've built

The ending underneath both of them is your first case ending, and it has been busy. It was glossed *to* and *for*. It carries the person who knows, wants or has something — എനിക്ക്. You put it on an hour to mean *at*. And now these two postpositions lean on it as well. No new machinery in this chapter at all. And you can now order in two ways: ആദ്യം and പിന്നെ lay a run out, while മുൻപ് and ശേഷം measure against a point you name.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *munpŭ*, then *śēṣani*
- *raṇṭṭu maṇikkū munpŭ*
- *uṇinŭ śēṣani*

- where these two stand, compared with where English puts them

Before you move on

Before two o'clock? (രണ്ട് മണിക്ക് മുൻപ്.) *After the meal?*
(ഊണിന് ശേഷം.) Do they go in front of the thing or behind it?
(Behind.)

Chapter 107

Medicine and Keeping Well

Modes: 🗣️ voice (5) 🗣️ Hands-free start: all 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name medicine, treatment and cleanliness, and place them around the symptoms I can already say.

From cold: three words around falling ill, and which one Malayalam did not have to borrow.

107.1 മരുന്ന് — medicine

Say *fever*. Say *a doctor*. You have had both for a long while, and nothing at all to put between them.

What to know first

മരുന്ന് (*marunnŭ*) — **medicine**.

You can already name what is wrong — the cough, the pain, the tiredness, the fever — and you can name the person you would go to. മരുന്ന് is the thing that was missing in the middle.

Why it's said this way

This one is not borrowed. It is an old Dravidian word, and Tamil says *marundhu* for the same thing. The remedy has a native name. That is worth holding on to, because the **next** word in this chapter — the one for the treatment itself — came from Sanskrit. The substance is named in Malayalam's own words; the practice is named in borrowed ones.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *marunnũ*
- the fever, then the medicine, then the doctor
- which language this word comes from, and what Tamil says

Before you move on

Medicine? (മരുന്ന്.) Who would you go to for it? (വൈദ്യൻ.) Is this word borrowed? (**No** — it is Dravidian, and Tamil has it too.)

107.2 ചികിത്സ — treatment

Say *medicine*. Say *a doctor*. One of those is a thing; the other is a person. Neither is what happens between them.

What to know first

ചികിത്സ (*cikitsa*) — **treatment**.

വൈദ്യൻ	<i>vaidyan</i>	the person
ചികിത്സ	<i>cikitsa</i>	what the person does
മരുന്ന്	<i>marunnũ</i>	what the person gives

Keep the caveat this book already gave you. ML-C48-doctor said വൈദ്യൻ today usually points at a practitioner of the traditional medicine, and that the hospital doctor goes by the English word. So this row is one of the two pictures Kerala keeps side by side, and it is the one with Malayalam words for all three parts.

Why it's said this way

Sanskrit, where the last word was Dravidian — and do not read a rule into that. This book has told you the opposite tendency twice: that Malayalam took **far more Sanskrit into everyday speech** than Tamil did, and that when a native verb narrowed, “*a Sanskrit word took each vacated slot*”. Borrowing here is the norm, not the formal exception.

What this small set shows is narrower and more interesting: of the three words this chapter gives you, **two are borrowed and one is not**, and the one that is not is the substance you swallow. The Sanskrit is चिकित्सा *cikitsā* — Malayalam drops the long final vowel. It is built from the root √*cit*, *to perceive*, in the **desiderative**: a regular Sanskrit formation meaning *wanting to*. So the word is assembled as something like **a wish to see clearly**, and that derivation is the standard one in the reference grammars rather than a folk story.

The word, taken apart — its roots and family

One join in this word is new, and it is new as a pair, not as a shape. Every letter in ചിക്രിത is one you have written. What you have not seen before is ത and സ joined:

ത	<i>ta</i>
്	chandrakkala
സ	<i>sa</i>

You met all three long ago — the two letters at ML-S08-letter-ta and ML-S124-letter-sa, and the chandrakkala at ML-W01-sa-chandrakkala-ka.

It is the machine നമസ്കാരം showed you on day one: the chandrakkala strips the first consonant's inherent *a*, and the next consonant sets in behind it. There സ് met ക; here ത് meets സ. Read ചി-കി-ത്-സ slowly, then at speed.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *cikitsa*
- the three together — *vaidyan*, *cikitsa*, *marunnū*
- which of the three is the native word

Before you move on

Treatment? (ചികിത്സ.) Of ചികിത്സ and മരുന്ന്, which is borrowed? (ചികിത്സ.) Which one is the substance? (മരുന്ന്.)

107.3 വൃത്തി — cleanliness

Say *medicine*, then *treatment*. Both of those come after something has gone wrong.

What to know first

വൃത്തി (*vr̥tti*) — cleanliness.

This is the everyday word, and it is worth being plain about its range. It is what you use about a room, a kitchen, a person's hands. Malayalam's formal word for hygiene as a subject — the kind printed on a public notice — is *śucitvani*, given here in sound only, because this book has not taught it. വൃത്തി is the one people say.

Why it's said this way

The Sanskrit it comes from does not mean clean at all. *vr̥tti* is built on the root $\sqrt{\text{vr̥t}}$, *to turn, to proceed* — so *a way of going on*: conduct, and also **livelihood**.

Malayalam did not narrow it; it added a sense and kept the rest. The word is still current for an occupation, and the older sense shows through in the everyday വൃത്തിക്കുട്ട — *filthy* — which is literally *of spoiled conduct*.

How *a way of going on* came to mean *how clean you keep things* is a short step if you have ever been told that a clean house is a matter of character. Take that road as the traditional account rather than a settled fact; both senses are well attested, and it is the path between them that is told rather than proved.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *vr̥tti*

- *marunnũ*, then *vṛtti* — the medicine, and the thing that comes before needing one
- what the Sanskrit word behind it meant

Before you move on

Cleanliness? (വൃത്തി.) What does the Sanskrit root behind it mean? (**To turn, to proceed** — so *a way of going on.*) Of this chapter's three words, which is the native one? (മരുന്ന്.)

107.4 വൃത്തി, ചികിത്സ — on either side of falling ill

Say *fever*. Say *cough*. Those are the middle of the story.

What to know first

Lay this chapter out against what you already had and it makes a line:

വൃത്തി	<i>vṛtti</i>	before — keeping well
പനി, ചുമ	<i>pani, cuma</i>	the thing going wrong
ചികിത്സ, മരുന്ന്	<i>cikitsa, marunnũ</i>	after — getting well

Two of those five are native and three are borrowed, and it is not the split you would guess: പനി and ചുമ, the two you have had longest, are the Dravidian ones — their own lessons say so — and മരുന്ന് joins them from this chapter.

You have had the middle of that line for a long while, and the far end only as a person. You could say what was wrong, and name വൈദ്യൻ — but not one word for what they would actually do, or give, or for the keeping-well that comes before any of it.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- the line in order — *vṛtti, pani, cikitsa, marunnũ*
- which of the four words in that line you have had the longest

- the person who stands at the far end — *vaidyan*
- which of *vr̥tti*, *cikitsa* and *marunnũ* is not borrowed

Before you move on

Which word comes **before** falling ill? (വൃത്തി.) Which two come **after**? (ചികിത്സ and മരുന്ന്.) Which of those two is the substance? (മരുന്ന്.)

107.5 (medicine, treatment, cleanliness) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say *medicine*, *treatment* and *cleanliness*.

Grammar Lens: one native word among three

മരുന്ന്	<i>marunnũ</i>	Dravidian — Tamil says <i>marundhu</i>
ചികിത്സ	<i>cikitsa</i>	Sanskrit
വൃത്തി	<i>vr̥tti</i>	Sanskrit, and it meant conduct

The thing you swallow kept its own name; the practice and the virtue came in from Sanskrit. Do not read a rule into it — this book has told you that Malayalam took **far more Sanskrit into everyday speech** than Tamil did. What is true of these three is true of these three: two borrowed, one not, and the one that is not is the substance.

What you've built

You had the symptoms and the person, and nothing in between. പനി and വേദന came with the other words for feeling unwell, and വൈദ്യൻ came with the words for what people do — so you could say what was wrong and who you would see, and nothing about what would be done.

You have had one end of it longer than you think: സുഖം, well-being, has been yours since you first asked somebody how they

were. What this chapter adds is the keeping of it, and the mending when it goes.
Now the line runs end to end: keep clean, fall ill, be treated, take the medicine.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *marunnũ, cikitsa, vṛtti*
- which one is Dravidian
- what *vṛtti* meant in Sanskrit
- the whole line, from keeping well to taking the medicine

Before you move on

Medicine, treatment, cleanliness? (മരുന്ന്, ചികിത്സ, വൃത്തി.)
Which one did Malayalam not have to borrow? (മരുന്ന്.) What did വൃത്തി mean before it meant clean? (Conduct.)

Chapter 108

The Marks on the Page

Modes:  voice (1)  pen (5)  Hands-free start: none of the 6 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name and place the punctuation marks Malayalam prints, and say which Malayalam pieces were doing their work before they arrived.

From cold: ten marks, where each one stands, and the three jobs Malayalam had already filled.

108.1 . — how a Malayalam sentence ends

You have read Malayalam sentences since your first greeting. Nobody has told you how one ends.

Look back at any page of this book. The mark is already there.

Script you'll notice: .

. — the full stop, at the end of a sentence, exactly where English puts it.

That is the whole of it, and the reason it is so small is worth a page.

The Malayalam letters brought no punctuation with them.

Count the characters Unicode gives the Malayalam script — every vowel, every consonant, every sign that hangs off one — and not a single mark among them is punctuation. The alphabet you have been learning since your first letter has no full stop in it, no comma, no question mark. Those came from somewhere else.

Why it's said this way

There was an older answer, and you have a cousin who still uses it.

The classical tradition closed a sentence with a single upright stroke, the **daṇḍa**:

|

Sanskrit works that way still, and a Malayalam manuscript of the old kind does too. Doubled — || — it closes a verse.

Modern printed Malayalam does not. Newspapers, signboards, schoolbooks and telephones all use the European marks, the same set English uses, and the stroke stayed behind with the palm-leaf manuscripts. You are reading the newer answer because it is the one in front of you everywhere.

This book gives you the marks by their English names.

Malayalam has its own names for them, and they are not written down here, for the same reason the stroke order of a letter is not: they belong in the book when they can be given with a source.

Writing: . — where it goes

Tight against the last letter, no space before it, one space after.

ഞാൻ വരും.

The dot sits on the writing line. Nothing about the Malayalam letter before it changes to accommodate it.

Your turn

- *Write it:* ഞാൻ വരും and close it with a full stop
- *Look:* at these two closings, and say which one a Malayalam newspaper prints

. · |

- *Say it:* how many punctuation marks the Malayalam alphabet contains

Before you move on

What closes a Malayalam sentence in print today? (**A full stop — the same dot English uses.**) What closed one in the classical tradition? (**The *daṇḍa***, a single upright stroke.) How many punctuation marks does the Malayalam alphabet itself carry? (**None.**)

108.2 , — the comma, and the list that does not need one

Say the full stop's job in one line.

Then say your longest list out loud: *water and rice and milk*.

Script you'll notice: ,

, — the comma. A dot with a tail, sitting on the writing line and hanging below it, tight against the word before.

It borrowed into Malayalam with the full stop, out of the same European set, and it does the ordinary things you would expect — separating parts of a long sentence, setting off a name you are calling to.

Grammar Lens: what your own list does instead

The place an English writer reaches for a comma most often is the place Malayalam has already filled.

You built this list when you learned to join things:

വെള്ളവും അരിയും പാലും

English puts commas in and saves one *and* for the last pair: *water, rice and milk*. Malayalam hangs -ഉം on **every** item instead, and the ending does the separating that the commas were doing.

English

water, rice and milk

Malayalam

വെള്ളവും അരിയും പാലും

Read the Malayalam row again and find the ending three times — once at the close of each word.

So a written Malayalam list of this kind carries no commas at all —

not because a writer is avoiding them, but because there is nothing left for them to do.

Where the comma earns its keep is the longer sentence: two clauses, or a piece set aside in the middle. There it behaves as you would expect from English.

Writing: , — where it goes

No space before, one space after — the same habit as the full stop.

Draw ten commas in a row and watch that every tail goes the same way.

Your turn

- *Write it:* വെള്ളവും അരിയും പാലും — and put no comma in it
- *Say it:* which piece of the Malayalam list does the job English gives the comma
- *Write it:* ten commas in a row

Before you move on

How many commas are in വെള്ളവും അരിയും പാലും? (**None.**)
What is doing their work? (-ഉം, on every item.) Which side of the comma takes the space? (**After it.**)

108.3 ? — the mark you have been reading all along

Ask somebody their name, out loud. Then picture how that sentence was printed on the page you learned it from.

Script you'll notice: ?

? — the question mark, at the end, one space clear of the next sentence.

You have been reading it since you first asked anybody their name. That was the headword ML-C02-ninre-peru-entaanu:

നിന്റെ പേര് എന്താണ്?

It has been on the page ever since, never once named. Here it is.

! — the exclamation mark, in the same position, doing what it does in English.

Grammar Lens: one mark, at the end, and nothing at the front

Spanish opens a question as well as closing it — *¿cómo estás?* — with an upside-down mark at the front. Malayalam has only the closing one:

Spanish	¿ ... ?
Malayalam	... ?

The mark is not what makes it a question. എന്ത്, ആര് and എപ്പോൾ were doing that from your first questions onward, and ML-C03-sukhamaano showed the other way: add **-ō** to the end and a statement becomes a yes/no question.

Writing: ? — where it goes

Tight against the last letter, one space after. It closes the sentence by itself; no full stop follows it.

Your turn

- *Write it:* നിന്റെ പേര് എന്താണ് and close it the way you first saw it closed
- *Say it:* what a Spanish sentence puts at the front that a Malayalam one does not
- *Say it:* which piece of സുഖമാണോ makes it a question, mark or no mark

Before you move on

Where does a Malayalam question mark stand? (**At the end, and nowhere else.**) Does a full stop follow it? (**No — it closes the sentence on its own.**) What was making your questions questions before this lesson? (**The question words, and the ending -ō.**)

108.4 ” ” — quoting, when a word is already doing it

Say the marker that turns a sentence into the thing somebody said.

Then say the whole line: *“I know Malayalam,” I say.*

Script you’ll notice: ” ” and —

” ” — quotation marks, one pair around the words somebody said.

You have been reading them all along, and nothing stopped to say so. ML-C72-ennu, the lesson that taught you എന്ന്, printed the quoted sentence inside a pair of them:

“എനിക്ക് മലയാളം അറിയാം” എന്ന് ഞാൻ പറയുന്നു.

The marks were around the quoted sentence and the lesson went straight past them, because എന്ന് was the thing it had come to teach.

— — the long dash, which opens a line of dialogue in printed fiction instead of the marks: a dash, a space, then the speech.

Grammar Lens: the marker and the marks do the same job twice

what എന്ന് does

marks the sentence before it as the thing said

what ” ” does

marks the words inside them as the thing said

A Malayalam sentence can carry both, and often does — the marks for the eye, the word for the grammar. Neither one makes the other wrong.

Your Sanskrit cousin shows the other end of this. Classical Sanskrit has no quotation mark at all, and closes a quotation with इति *iti* — the same job എന്ന് does, on a page with no marks to help it. Malayalam kept the word and took the marks as well.

Writing: ” ” — where they go

Tight against the first and last letter of the quoted words, nothing between the mark and the letter.

The dialogue dash takes a space after it, and opens the line rather than enclosing it — there is no second dash at the end.

Your turn

- *Write it:* എനിക്ക് മലയാളം അറിയാം inside a pair of quotation marks
- *Say it:* the Malayalam word that marks reported speech without any punctuation
- *Say it:* what a printed Malayalam story puts at the start of a spoken line

Before you move on

Where did you first read quotation marks? (**Around the quoted sentence in front of എന്ന്.**) Does the marker stop you using the marks? (**No — a sentence can carry both.**) What opens a line of dialogue instead of the marks? (**A long dash.**)

108.5 : () - / — the four that are left

Name the three marks you already own, and say where each one stands.

Script you'll notice: : () - /

Four marks, and all four behave the way their English counterparts do.

:	the colon — before a list, or before the thing you are about to spell out
()	parentheses — a pair, around an aside
-	the hyphen — a short stroke joining two pieces
/	the slash — between two alternatives

The colon and the parentheses take no space on the inside and one on the outside. The hyphen and the slash take none on either side.

Grammar Lens: two of these you have hardly seen

Go back through every Malayalam word this book has taught you and count the hyphens in them. There are none.

The compounds you have been taught run their pieces together — പള്ളിക്കൂടം, തലസ്ഥാനം — with no stroke marking the seam.

Where the two pieces do stay apart, as in ശുഭ രാത്രി, what stands between them is a plain space. Neither way uses a hyphen. Where English writes *twenty-one* or *mother-in-law*, Malayalam writes one word or two, and never a stroke.

So the hyphens you *have* seen on these pages are **this book's notation**, not Malayalam spelling:

-ിക്ക്	an ending, shown detached from the word it attaches to
-ആൻ	the same
i- / a- / e-	three stems, shown as beginnings, with a slash between them

That third row is the slash doing its ordinary job — *this or this or this* — and it is about as often as the slash turns up in ordinary Malayalam prose too.

Writing: the four

Two dots, one above the other, on the line. A pair of curves facing each other. A short stroke at mid-height. A leaning stroke.

None of them changes the Malayalam letter beside it.

Your turn

- *Say it*: how many hyphens are inside പള്ളിക്കൂടം
- *Write it*: a colon, a pair of parentheses, a hyphen and a slash, in that order
- *Say it*: what the hyphen in -ആൻ is telling you

Before you move on

How is a Malayalam compound written — joined by a hyphen, or solid? (**Solid.**) What are the hyphens in this book marking, then? (**An ending or a stem shown on its own.**) Which mark goes between two alternatives? (**The slash.**)

108.6 (. , ? ! ” ” — : () - /) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Name the mark that ends a sentence, the one that ends a question, and the one that separates.

Grammar Lens: what was already doing the job

Three of these marks arrived at a job Malayalam had already filled, and that is the shape of the whole chapter:

the comma in a list	-ഉം, on every item
the question mark	the question words, and the ending -ഓ
the quotation marks	എന്ന്, after the thing said

The marks came in from Europe and sat down beside machinery that was already working. They are for a reader's eye. The Malayalam pieces are the grammar, and they were there first.

What you've built

You could read this whole book and never be told what the dot at the end was. It was on the page from your first sentence. So was the question mark, the first time you asked a name, and so were the quotation marks around the words in front of എന്ന്. Now the page has no unexplained furniture on it: ten marks, each named, and the one thing the Malayalam alphabet never supplied — a mark of its own.

Your turn

- *Write it:* ഞാൻ വരും closed with a full stop, then നിന്റെ പേര് എന്താണ് closed with a question mark

- *Say it:* how many commas belong in വെള്ളവും അരിയും പാലും
- *Say it:* how many punctuation marks the Malayalam alphabet carries
- *Say it:* what closed a sentence before the European marks came

Before you move on

Where did you first read a question mark? (**Asking somebody their name.**) What does a Malayalam question put at the front, the way Spanish does? (**Nothing.**) Which Malayalam word does the work of quotation marks? (എന്ന്.) And where did the marks themselves come from? (**Europe — the Malayalam script supplied none.**)

Chapter 109

Neither This Nor That

Modes: ⇄ voice (3) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 3 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can deny a pair of things at once, and pick the right negative for what I am denying.

From cold: both shapes of neither-nor, and the question English never makes you answer.

109.1 ചായയും കാപ്പിയും ഇല്ല — neither of them is here

Join two things with the ending you know: *tea and coffee*.

Then say the word for *there isn't any*.

What to know first

ചായയും കാപ്പിയും ഇല്ല.

cāyayum kāppiyum illa — “There is neither tea nor coffee.”

Nothing in that sentence is new. You built ചായയും കാപ്പിയും when you learned to join two things, and ഇല്ല has been yours since your first conversation. Put the one in front of the other and Malayalam has said *neither*.

Grammar Lens: English buys a special word for this and Malayalam does not

English reaches for a pair of words it keeps only for this job — *neither ... nor* — and they behave unlike anything else in the sentence. Malayalam spends nothing:

ചായയും കാപ്പിയും
ഇല്ല

the joining you already do
the negative you already have

The list is built the ordinary way, with the ending on **every** item, and then the whole list is denied at once. What English treats as a special construction, Malayalam treats as a list that happens to end in a negative.

Both items are inside the denial, which is the thing to hear. You are not saying *there is no tea, and coffee*. The ending has tied the two together before ഇല്ല arrives, so the negative lands on the pair.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *tea and coffee* — ചായയും കാപ്പിയും
- the same pair, denied — ചായയും കാപ്പിയും ഇല്ല
- which part of that sentence ties the two things together

Before you move on

How does Malayalam say *neither tea nor coffee*? (ചായയും കാപ്പിയും ഇല്ല.) How many new words did that need? (**None** — the joining ending and the negative, both already yours.) Does the negative land on one item or the pair? (**The pair.**)

109.2 അധ്യാപകനും വൈദ്യനും അല്ല — neither of them is what you called it

Say *neither tea nor coffee*.

Then say which of your two negatives denies that a thing is **there**, and which denies that a thing is **so**.

What to know first

അധ്യാപകനും വൈദ്യനും അല്ല.

adhyāpakanum vaidyanum alla — “[He] is **neither a teacher nor a doctor.**”

Same joining ending on each item. Different word at the end.

Grammar Lens: the choice you learned does not go away

You were told that Malayalam makes you pick a negative where English spends one word on both. **That decision survives into this construction**, and English’s *neither ... nor* hides it completely:

ചായയും കാപ്പിയും ഇല്ല	neither is there
അധ്യാപകനും വൈദ്യനും അല്ല	neither is what you called it

An English speaker says *neither ... nor* for both rows and never notices a question was asked. You have to answer it before you can finish the sentence — and the question is the same one as ever: are you denying that something is present, or denying that something is so?

The joining half does not change. Only the last word does, which is worth noticing: the work of coordinating stayed where it was, and all the difficulty lives in the negative.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *neither a teacher nor a doctor* — അധ്യാപകനും വൈദ്യനും അല്ല
- the tea-and-coffee sentence, and say which negative it ends in
- which negative you would reach for to deny that two people are in the room

Before you move on

Which part of the sentence changes between the two kinds of *neither*? (**Only the last word** — the joining is identical.) Which negative denies that something is present? (ഇല്ല.) Which denies that something is what you called it? (അല്ല.)

109.3 (neither ... nor) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say *neither tea nor coffee*, then *neither a teacher nor a doctor*.

Grammar Lens: one joining, two endings

ചായയും കാപ്പിയും ഇല്ല	neither is there
അധ്യാപകനും വൈദ്യനും അല്ല	neither is so

The left half of those two sentences is built the same way.

Every item takes the joining ending, and the pair is denied as a pair. What differs is the last word, and picking it is the same decision you have been making since you owned two negatives.

What you've built

You could join things and you could deny things, and you had never been shown that doing both at once needs nothing further. English keeps a special pair of words for this and teaches them as their own lesson. Malayalam had already given you every piece; what was missing was the sentence that puts them together.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- both sentences, one after the other
- how many new words this chapter asked you to learn
- the question you answer before choosing the last word

Before you move on

What does Malayalam put on each item of the pair? (**The joining ending.**) What decides the final word? (**Whether you deny that something is there, or that something is so.**) Which English words does this replace? (*Neither ... nor* — and Malayalam spends no new word on them.)

Chapter 110

Reaching Somebody

Modes: 🗣️ voice (4) 👁️ eyes (1) ✍️ pen (1) 🗣️ Hands-free start: none of the 6 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can name the telephone, a letter, the post, e-mail and the internet, and say an address aloud as far as the stop.

From cold: five ways of reaching somebody, and the new letter that opens the first.

110.1 ഫ — one character, met with the word that needs it

Before the new one: ഫ — say its sound.

One character this time. One only. It arrives with the word on the next page.

Script you'll notice: ഫ

ഫ — *pha*.

It is the breathed partner of പ. Begin with the same lip closure, then let a puff of air follow the release: പ *pa*, ഫ *pha*.

Malayalam pairs stops this way — a plain one and a breathed one beside it. This one has not appeared in a headword yet; it arrives for the borrowed word on the next page.

Writing: ഫ — copy what you see

Put your pen on ഫ and follow its line. Copy the shape you can see — slowly, and larger than it is printed.

This book does not yet tell you **where to start the character or which way to travel**. That is a real thing, taught with real variation from school to school, and it is not written down here until it can be written down with a source. Copying what is in front of you needs no such source, and it is how the shape gets into your hand in the meantime.

Your turn

- *Look:* at these two, and say which one carries the breath

പ · ഫ

- *Trace it:* ഫ three times, saying *pha* as you finish each one
- *Say it:* *pa*, then *pha* — the same lips, one with a puff of air

Before you move on

Which character is this — ഫ? What sound does it carry? (*pha*.)
Which letter is it the breathed partner of? (പ.)

110.2 ഫോൺ (phōṇ) — a telephone

Think of the thing you would pick up to reach somebody far away.

You are about to find you can nearly say it already.

What to know first

ഫോൺ (*phōṇ*) — a telephone.

Say it out loud and you will hear English. It is *phone*, borrowed whole, with the ending settled into Malayalam sounds: the *n* at the close is made with the tongue curled back, not at the teeth.

Script Lens: three pieces

Read it from left to right:

ഫ	<i>pha</i> , the breathed partner of പ
ോ	<i>ō</i>
ൺ	final retroflex <i>ṇ</i> , with no following vowel

The first letter arrived on the page before this one. The last is the chillu you met inside അരുൺ near the beginning of the book. Together they let the borrowed English word settle into Malayalam spelling: ഫ + ഓ + ണ് = ഫോൺ.

Your turn

- *Say it:* ഫോൺ, with the tongue curled back at the end
- *Say it:* which language the word came from
- *Read it:* ഫ, ഓ, ണ്, then the whole word

Before you move on

A telephone? (ഫോൺ, *phōṇ*.) Where does the word come from? (English.) Which character closes it? (ൺ, final retroflex *ṇ*.)

110.3 കത്ത് — a letter

Read and say the word for a telephone: ഫോൺ.

Now think of the older way of reaching somebody who is far off.

What to know first

കത്ത് (*kattŭ*) — a letter, the kind you write and send.

Every piece of this word is one you can already read. The doubled ത്ത in the middle is the cluster you took apart in the school words, and the half-*u* at the end is the one you close dozens of words with.

Grammar Lens: a shape that hides inside a word you know

You have read these characters before, sitting inside another word.

അകത്ത്

inside

കത്ത്

a letter

Cover the first character of അകത്ത് and what is left looks exactly like കത്ത്. The two words are not related, and the resemblance is worth meeting once so it cannot mislead you later.

You were told how to read that pair when you learned it: *read the ends and not the fronts* — അകത്ത് and പുറത്ത് end alike and differ at the front, which is where their meaning sits. കത്ത് is a whole word rather than one of that pair, so the advice that sorts *inside* from *outside* is the same advice that keeps this one separate from both.

Your turn

- *Say it:* kattŭ
- *Look:* at അകത്ത് and കത്ത്, and say which one means *inside*
- *Say it:* a letter, and a telephone, one after the other

Before you move on

A letter? (കത്ത്.) Does it have anything to do with അകത്ത്? (No — the shapes overlap and the words do not.) A telephone? (ഫോൺ.)

110.4 തപാൽ — the post

Say the word for a letter.

Then ask yourself what carries it.

What to know first

തപാൽ (*tapāl*) — **the post**: the service, and the word printed on the box you drop a letter into.

കത്ത്	the thing you write
തപാൽ	the thing that carries it

The ending is one you can already read. ൽ is the chillu you have met closing other words — a bare *l* with no vowel after it.

Your turn

- Say it: *tapāl*
- Say it: the letter and the post, in that order
- Look: at തപാൽ and name the character that closes it

Before you move on

The post? (തപാൽ.) The thing you put in it? (കത്ത്.) What closes തപാൽ? (The chillu ൽ.)

110.5 ഇമെയിൽ — ഇന്റർനെറ്റ്

Say the post, and the thing it carries.

Then say the mark that ends a written sentence.

What to know first

ഇമെയിൽ (*imeyil*) — e-mail.

ഇന്റർനെറ്റ് (*inrarnerrŭ*) — the internet.

Both are English, borrowed whole and spelled in Malayalam letters, and both end the way you would expect: ഇമെയിൽ on the chillu ൽ you closed തപാൽ with, ഇന്റർനെറ്റ് on the half-*u*.

തപാൽ	carries കത്ത്
ഇന്റർനെറ്റ്	carries ഇമെയിൽ

Grammar Lens: you can already say an address out loud

An examiner may ask you to say an e-mail address, and the pieces are in hand: the letters, and the **full stop** you were taught with the other

marks. A Malayalam speaker reading an address aloud names that mark exactly where it sits.

The mark before the domain is a different matter. This book has not given you a Malayalam name for it, for the same reason it gave you no Malayalam names for the punctuation marks: those names exist and are not written down here until they can be given with a source. What you can do already is spell the letters and place the stop.

Your turn

Say these aloud:

- *imeyil*, then *inrarnerrũ*
- which of the two carries the other
- the mark you name aloud when reading an address

Before you move on

E-mail? (ഇമെയിൽ.) The internet? (ഇന്റർനെറ്റ്.) Which older pair do those two mirror? (തപാൽ carrying കത്ത്.)

110.6 (phone, letter, post, e-mail, internet) — from cold

Close the lessons before this one. Say *telephone*, *letter* and *the post*.

Grammar Lens: two ways of reaching somebody, a century apart

കത്ത് carried by തപാൽ	the older pair
ഇമെയിൽ carried by ഇന്റർനെറ്റ്	the newer one

The newer pair is borrowed and the older one is not, which is the ordinary way a language takes in a new thing: the object arrives with its name attached. What is worth noticing is that the *shape* of the pair did not change — a thing written, and a service that carries it.

What you've built

All five are words you can now read. The telephone added ഫ, the breathed partner of പ, and reused the final ണ from the opening chapters. The other four were already inside your script range. You can now name the telephone, write and send a letter, and say an address aloud as far as the stop.

Your turn

- *Say it:* all five words, in the order you met them
- *Read it:* ഫോൺ, and name its first and last consonants
- *Say it:* which pair is borrowed and which is not

Before you move on

Telephone, letter, post? (ഫോൺ, കത്ത്, തപാൽ.) E-mail and the internet? (ഇമെയിൽ, ഇന്റർനെറ്റ്.) Which new letter opens ഫോൺ? (ഫ.)

The Malayalam script — a reference

A **reference**, not a chapter — a place to look things up. You are *not* meant to read this before the lessons: the lessons teach reading through real words, introducing each letter as a word needs it. This page just gathers the system in one spot.

How the Malayalam script works (the three facts the lessons teach)

1. **Consonants carry a built-in “a”.** ക = “ka,” മ = “ma,” ര = “ra.” You never write the short *a* — it’s already there.
2. **A vowel sign changes that built-in vowel.** Attached to a consonant it gives കാ = k $\bar{a}$ · കി = ki · കീ = k $\bar{i}$ · കു = ku · കൂ = k $\bar{u}$ · കെ = ke · കേ = k $\bar{e}$ · കൊ = ko · കോ = k $\bar{o}$. The signs themselves are ാ ā · ി i · ീ ī · ു u · ൂ ū · ൃ e · ൄ ē · െ o · േ ō. (The *e/o* signs are written *before* their consonant but read after.)
3. **The *chandrakkala* (്) strips the built-in vowel, and bare consonants join as conjuncts.** സ് + ക → സ്ക (ska), ന് + ദ → നദ (nda), ല് + ല → ല്ല (lla). A circle **anusvāram** (ം) adds a final nasal.

Independent vowels (word-initial)

അ a · ആ ā · ഇ i · ഊ ī · ഉ u · ഊ ū · എ e · ഏ ē · ഐ ai · ഓ o · ഔ ō · ഔ au.

Worth flagging

- **The largest Dravidian alphabet.** Because Malayalam borrowed so heavily from Sanskrit, it keeps the full Sanskrit inventory — aspirates (ഖ kh, ധ dh...) and all three sibilants (ശ ś, ഷ ṣ, സ s) — alongside the native Dravidian retroflex letters Tamil also has (ള ḷ, ഴ ṣ, റ ṛ).
- **Rounded forms, many conjuncts.** Malayalam's curved letters and rich stock of stacked/ligated conjuncts give it a dense, distinctive look.

Malayalam in the Dravidian family

Dravidian is a family entirely separate from Indo-European (English, Latin, Sanskrit). Malayalam is the **closest sister of Tamil** — the two split from one language only about a thousand years ago — so its everyday core is strikingly Tamil-like (*nandi* = Tamil *nan̄ri*; *illa* = *illai*; *śari* = *sari*; the *pōyi varām* farewell $\approx$ *pōy varugirēn*). At the same time it absorbed a vast Sanskrit layer, which is why its formal greeting (*namaskāram*) and its full letter-set are Sanskritised. The lessons trace, word by word, what is inherited Dravidian and what is borrowed.

Glossary

This glossary collects every word and phrase taught in the book. Pronunciation appears when it differs from the written form; chapter numbers show where each entry is introduced.

-ആൻ *-ān*

the ending that turns a dictionary verb into “to do it” — swap -uka for -aan
Introduced in Chapter 74.

-ിക്ക് *-ikkŭ*

the dative suffix -ikkŭ, ‘to / for’ — and the idea of stacking
Introduced in Chapter 6.

അച്ഛൻ അമ്മ ചേട്ടൻ അനിയൻ ചേച്ചി അനിയത്തി *acchan amma cēṭṭan anīyan cēcci aniyatti*

father, mother, and four age-graded sibling words — Malayalam’s own distinct set, still following the shared Dravidian age-first pattern
Introduced in Chapter 12.

അധ്യാപകൻ *adhyāpakan*

a teacher
Introduced in Chapter 48.

അകലെ *akale*

far away — the other end of the scale, and a shape that looks like a pattern and is not one
Introduced in Chapter 81.

ആകാശം *ākāśam*

the sky
Introduced in Chapter 53.

അകത്ത് *akattŭ*

inside — and its opposite, the pair a doorway divides
Introduced in Chapter 95.

അല്ല *alla*

is not so — the second of Malayalam’s two negatives, and the one that denies what a thing IS
Introduced in Chapter 77.

അല്ലേ *allē*

isn't it? — the tag that invites agreement, where the question particle asks for an answer

Introduced in Chapter 77.

ആന *āna*

an elephant

Introduced in Chapter 60.

അങ്ങനെ *aṅṅane*

that way, just so

Introduced in Chapter 49.

ആണ് *āṇ*

is (the copula)

Introduced in Chapter 2.

അനുഗ്രഹം *anugraham*

a blessing

Introduced in Chapter 51.

അനുവാദം *anuvādam*

permission

Introduced in Chapter 65.

അപേക്ഷ *apēkṣa*

a request

Introduced in Chapter 65.

ആറാം *ārām*

sixth — six to ten were a separate lesson for counting, and are not one for ordering

Introduced in Chapter 68.

അറിയുക *ariyuka*

to know — the verb inside എനിക്ക് മലയാളം അറിയാം, and the one that will not let you be the subject

Introduced in Chapter 32.

ആര് *ār*

who? — asking about a person

Introduced in Chapter 41.

āṛ ēlū eṭṭū ombatū pattū

hear and say six to ten before meeting their written forms

Introduced in Chapter 7.

അടയ്ക്കുക *aṭaykkuka*

to close — the other half of the pair, and the form you would put on a sign

Introduced in Chapter 95.

അതെ *athe*

yes (athe — “that [is so]”)

Introduced in Chapter 1.

അതിഥി *atithi*

a guest

Introduced in Chapter 48.

അത് *atŭ*

that one — the thing over there

Introduced in Chapter 41.

ആട് *ātŭ*

a goat

Introduced in Chapter 60.

അടുത്ത് *aṭuttŭ*

near, close by — the first word this track has for measuring a distance rather than pointing at one

Introduced in Chapter 81.

അവൻ / അവൾ *avan / aval*

he and she — the pointing system you have for things, turned on a person

Introduced in Chapter 71.

അവനെ *avane*

him, as an object — a full word with the ordinary ending, where English and its neighbours shrink the pronoun instead

Introduced in Chapter 87.

അവർ *avar*

they — and, about one person, the respectful he or she, by the trick you met in chapter two

Introduced in Chapter 71.

അവിടെ *aviṭe*

there — where I am not

Introduced in Chapter 41.

ബഹുമാനം *bahumānani*

respect

Introduced in Chapter 51.

ഭക്ഷണം *bhakṣaṇani*

food — the general word this book had no room for while it was naming particular dishes

Introduced in Chapter 92.

ഭംഗി *bhanigi*

beauty — and the sentence that uses it, which says beautiful

Introduced in Chapter 97.

ഭർത്താവ് *bharttāvŭ*

husband

Introduced in Chapter 45.

ഭാര്യ *bhārya*

wife

Introduced in Chapter 45.

ബിൽ *bil*

the bill — the end of the meal, asked for with words the shopping chapter already gave you

Introduced in Chapter 92.

ചന്ദ്രൻ *candran*

the moon

Introduced in Chapter 53.

ചായ *cāya*

tea — Chinese, carried overland through Persian and Hindi before it ever reached Kerala

Introduced in Chapter 39.

ചായയോ കാപ്പിയോ *cāyayō kāppiyō*

tea or coffee — the ending that offers a choice, built the same way as the one that joins

Introduced in Chapter 70.

ചെളി *ceḷi*

mud

Introduced in Chapter 59.

ചെറിയ *ceṛiya*

small

Introduced in Chapter 42.

ചെരുപ്പ് *ceruppŭ*

a sandal — the footwear half of the label, next to the two garments

Introduced in Chapter 100.

ചേട്ടാ *cēṭṭā*

excuse me, brother — the kinship word turned into a way of calling a stranger, and the ending that turns it

Introduced in Chapter 82.

ചെവി *cevi*

ear — where three of the four sisters agree, and the fourth alone keeps the older sound

Introduced in Chapter 37.

ചികിത്സ *cikitsa*

treatment — the borrowed word for the practice, beside the native word for the substance

Introduced in Chapter 107.

ചിലപ്പോൾ *cilappōl*

sometimes

Introduced in Chapter 64.

ചിങ്ങം കന്നി തുലാം വൃശ്ചികം ധനു മകരം കുമാരം മീനം മേടം ഇടവം
 മിഥുനം കർക്കടകം *ciṅṇaṁ kanni tulāṁ vṛścikaṁ dhanu makaraṁ*
kumbhaṁ mīnaṁ mēṭaṁ iṭavaṁ mithunaṁ karkkaṭakaṁ
 the twelve months of the Malayalam (Kollam Era) solar calendar — also solar,
 like Tamil’s, but named for ZODIAC SIGNS rather than nakshatras
 Introduced in Chapter 16.

ചിന്തിക്കുക *cintikkuka*
 to think — a Sanskrit noun turned into a verb by the same -ഇക്കുക that made
 ക്ഷമിക്കുക, and the first of four verbs about what happens inside a head
 Introduced in Chapter 33.

ചോദിക്കുക *cōdikkuka*
 to ask — a Sanskrit word for pushing that walked into a gap Malayalam had
 made by narrowing its own inherited verb to “hear”
 Introduced in Chapter 34.

ചൂല് *cūlŭ*
 a broom
 Introduced in Chapter 62.

ചുമ *cuma*
 a cough
 Introduced in Chapter 63.

ചുണ്ട് *cunṭŭ*
 a lip
 Introduced in Chapter 57.

ദയവായി *dayavāyi*
 please (dayavāyi — “as a compassion,” from ദയ *daya* “compassion”)
 Introduced in Chapter 8.

ദിവസം *divasaṁ*
 “day” — everyday Sanskrit *divasaṁ* beside the more literary Sanskrit *dinam*
 Introduced in Chapter 23.

ഈണം *ēṭaṁ*
 seventh — the curled zh Malayalam and Tamil kept, held right through the ending
 Introduced in Chapter 68.

എല്ല *ellŭ*
 a bone
 Introduced in Chapter 57.

എളുപ്പം *eḷuppaṁ*
 easy — said of a thing, in a frame you have been using for most of the book
 Introduced in Chapter 96.

എഴുതുക *eḷutū*
 write
 Introduced in Chapter 44.

എഴുതുക *elutuka*

to write — the same word as Tamil எழுது, carrying the ൭ that only these two sisters kept, and the chapter’s closing count of four
Introduced in Chapter 33.

എനിക്ക് മലയാളം അറിയാം *enikkū malayāḷam ariyāmi*

‘I know Malayalam’ — built with no subject, because knowing happens TO you
Introduced in Chapter 6.

എനിക്ക് മലയാളം ഇഷ്ടമാണ് *enikkū malayāḷam iṣṭamāṇ*

‘I like Malayalam’ — a noun, a copula, and a dative; the one sentence in this book where putting yourself in the subject slot is not merely odd but impossible
Introduced in Chapter 34.

എണ്ണ *eṇṇa*

oil

Introduced in Chapter 61.

എന്നാൽ *ennāl*

but, on the other hand

Introduced in Chapter 64.

എങ്ങനെ *eṇṇane*

how

Introduced in Chapter 3.

എന്ന് *ennū*

the quotative ennu, which turns a whole sentence into the thing that is said
Introduced in Chapter 72.

എന്ന് ചിന്തിക്കുന്നു *ennū cintikkunnu*

the same marker with think, know and ask — one word opening four verbs the book already taught

Introduced in Chapter 72.

എന്റെ *eṇre*

my

Introduced in Chapter 2.

എന്റെ പേര് ... ആണ് *eṇre pēr ... āṇ*

my name is...

Introduced in Chapter 2.

എന്ത് *entū*

what

Introduced in Chapter 2.

എന്തുകൊണ്ടെന്നാൽ *entukoṇṭennāl*

the written because, which carries the whole question word inside it

Introduced in Chapter 73.

എന്തുകൊണ്ട് *entukoṇṭ*

why — the word for what, with the ending that means “by means of”

Introduced in Chapter 73.

എപ്പോൾ *eppōl*

when? — the third of a set you already own two thirds of
Introduced in Chapter 75.

എത്ര ദൂരം *etra dūram*

how far — distance as a thing you can ask for a number of, and എത്ര lifted out of the age question
Introduced in Chapter 81.

എത്ര മണിക്കൂർ *etra maṇikkū*

at what time? — one ending away from a question you have been able to ask since you learned the verb for asking
Introduced in Chapter 102.

എത്ര രൂപ *etra rūpa*

how many rupees — the price question, built from a word freed two chapters back and numbers taught one chapter back
Introduced in Chapter 91.

എട്ടാം *eṭṭām*

eighth — the doubled retroflex stays doubled
Introduced in Chapter 68.

എടുക്കുക *eṭukkuka*

to take — native to the bone, yet ending in -ക്കുക like the borrowings; the letter that actually does the stamping is the ഇ
Introduced in Chapter 34.

എവിടെ *eviṭe*

where? — asking about a place
Introduced in Chapter 41.

എവിടെ നിന്ന് *eviṭe ninnŭ*

where from? — the question you have been asked since the ground words, now askable and answerable
Introduced in Chapter 83.

ഹോട്ടൽ *hōṭṭal*

an eating place — a borrowed word that does not mean in Kerala what it means in English
Introduced in Chapter 92.

ഹൃദയം *hṛdayam*

heart — Sanskrit tatsama, and a genuine (if distant) cousin of the English word
Introduced in Chapter 38.

ഇല്ല *illa*

no / there isn't (illa — the negative)
Introduced in Chapter 1.

ഇമെയിൽ — ഇൻ്റർനെറ്റ് *imeyil — inṛarnerrŭ*

e-mail and the internet, and what you already own for saying an address out loud
Introduced in Chapter 110.

ഇന്നലെ *innale*

yesterday — the day behind you, built visibly on the word for today
Introduced in Chapter 94.

ഇന്ന് *innŋ*

today — the day you are standing in, and the first of three words that place an event without a calendar
Introduced in Chapter 94.

ഇപ്പോൾ *ippōl*

now
Introduced in Chapter 50.

ഇത് *itŋ*

this one — the thing near me
Introduced in Chapter 41.

ഇവിടെ *iviṭe*

here — where I am
Introduced in Chapter 41.

ജോലി ചെയ്യുക *jōli ceyyuka*

to work (lit. “work-do”)
Introduced in Chapter 5.

കാക്ക *kākka*

a crow
Introduced in Chapter 60.

കാൽ *kāl*

leg, foot
Introduced in Chapter 47.

കലപ്പ *kalappa*

a plough
Introduced in Chapter 66.

കാലാവസ്ഥ *kālāvastha*

weather — a Sanskrit compound literally meaning “state of TIME”: kaala (“time”) + avastha (“state, condition”) — a real echo of Spanish’s tiempo meaning both “time” AND “weather”
Introduced in Chapter 20.

കളി *kalī*

a game, play — the thing done for its own sake, which this book has had no word for
Introduced in Chapter 98.

കളിക്കുക *kalikkuka*

to play — the game word with a verb ending you have had since long before this chapter
Introduced in Chapter 98.

കഴിയും *kaliyumi*

can — and it arrives at you in the dative, exactly the way knowing does
Introduced in Chapter 74.

കഴുത്ത് *kaluttŭ*

the neck

Introduced in Chapter 57.

കനൽ *kanal*

an ember, a live coal

Introduced in Chapter 59.

കണ്ണ് *kaṇṇŭ*

eye — Proto-Dravidian, nearly identical across all four literary Dravidian languages

Introduced in Chapter 37.

കാണുക *kāṇuka*

to see — the family’s shared see-root, kept as Malayalam’s everyday word, and the mood endings that share one slot with tense

Introduced in Chapter 32.

കാപ്പി *kāppi*

coffee — an English colonial-era loan, itself from Arabic by way of Turkish and Italian; tea and coffee arrived by opposite roads

Introduced in Chapter 39.

കാരണം *kāraṇam*

a reason — the Sanskrit noun Malayalam also uses as the everyday word for because

Introduced in Chapter 73.

കാറ്റ് *kārrŭ*

wind

Introduced in Chapter 59.

കർഷകൻ *karṣakan*

a farmer

Introduced in Chapter 48.

കറുപ്പ് വെള്ള ചുവപ്പ് നീല *karuppŭ vella cuvappŭ nīla*

black, white, red, blue — Malayalam shares Tamil’s native colors, and its Sanskrit blue too

Introduced in Chapter 11.

കസേര *kasēra*

a chair

Introduced in Chapter 52.

കട *kaṭa*

a shop — the place a whole scenario has been waiting on

Introduced in Chapter 91.

കഥ *katha*

a story — an അ-final word, so the glide that chapter 98 taught comes back
Introduced in Chapter 99.

കതിര് *katirũ*

an ear of ripe paddy
Introduced in Chapter 66.

കത്തി *katti*

a knife
Introduced in Chapter 56.

കത്ത് *kattũ*

a letter — the written kind, built from a doubling you have read since the school
chapter
Introduced in Chapter 110.

കയര് *kayar*

coir rope
Introduced in Chapter 62.

കേൾക്കൂ *kēḷkkū*

listen
Introduced in Chapter 44.

കേരളം ഇന്ത്യ *kēraḷam indya*

Kerala and India — two fixed points on the scale നാട് floats over
Introduced in Chapter 80.

കോലം *kōlam*

the pattern drawn at a doorway
Introduced in Chapter 52.

കോഴി *kōḷi*

a hen
Introduced in Chapter 60.

കൊമ്പ് *kompũ*

a branch
Introduced in Chapter 54.

കൊട്ട *koṭṭa*

a basket
Introduced in Chapter 56.

കൊയ്ത്ത് *koyttũ*

the harvest, the reaping
Introduced in Chapter 66.

കൃതജ്ഞത *kṛtajñata*

gratitude
Introduced in Chapter 51.

ക്ഷമിക്കണം *kṣamikkaṇam*

(you) should forgive / sorry (kṣamikkaṇam — from kṣamikkuka “to forgive,”
Sanskrit kṣama + necessitative -aṇam)
Introduced in Chapter 9.

ക്ഷീണം *kṣīṇam*

tiredness

Introduced in Chapter 63.

കുറച്ച് *kuraccū*

a little, a few

Introduced in Chapter 58.

കുറവ് *kuravū*

less, a shortage

Introduced in Chapter 58.

കുറിയ *kuriya*

short — built exactly like ചെറിയ, and not a second word for it

Introduced in Chapter 101.

കൂടെ *kūṭe*

with, alongside — the everyday partner of ഒപ്പം, and the same register split you
met with the degree words

Introduced in Chapter 86.

കുടിക്കുക *kuṭikkuka*

to drink — the verb four drinks in this book have been waiting for

Introduced in Chapter 85.

കുട്ടി *kuṭṭi*

child, kid — the general word, native Dravidian, before Malayalam narrows to son
or daughter

Introduced in Chapter 36.

കുടുംബം *kuṭumbam*

family — the collective word Chapter 12’s six people-words never needed, because
each of them already named one specific person

Introduced in Chapter 35.

കൂടുതൽ *kūṭutal*

more

Introduced in Chapter 58.

മകൾ *maḱaḷ*

daughter — identical to Tamil’s own word, sound for sound, closer even than the
son-word

Introduced in Chapter 36.

മകൻ *maḱan*

son — Proto-Dravidian, closely matching Tamil, where Kannada softened the
same root

Introduced in Chapter 36.

മാല *māla*

a garland

Introduced in Chapter 52.

മലയാളി *malayāḷi*

a Malayali — the person word built from the language word, and how Malayalam says “from there”

Introduced in Chapter 80.

മണൽ *maṇal*

sand

Introduced in Chapter 59.

മനസ്സിലാക്കുക *manassilākkuka*

to understand — literally “to put it in the mind,” a three-piece word you can take apart by ear, with a second form that hands the understanding to you instead

Introduced in Chapter 33.

മണി *maṇi*

hour — Malayalam’s OWN dictionary tradition treats bell/hour/gem as ONE Sanskrit word, unlike Tamil’s closely related maṇi, which its own dictionaries split into two unrelated homophones

Introduced in Chapter 18.

മരം *maram*

a tree

Introduced in Chapter 54.

മാർക്ക് *mārkkū*

marks — an English word that put on Malayalam clothes, and whose ending you have written many times

Introduced in Chapter 103.

മറ്റന്നാൾ *marrannāl*

the day after tomorrow

Introduced in Chapter 50.

മരുന്ന് *marunnū*

medicine — the thing that stands between the symptoms you can name and the doctor you can name

Introduced in Chapter 107.

മര്യാദ *maryāda*

good manners

Introduced in Chapter 65.

മതി *matī*

enough, that will do

Introduced in Chapter 49.

മാത്രം *mātram*

only, that much and no more

Introduced in Chapter 64.

മെലിഞ്ഞ *melinñā*

thin, of a person — an adjective that ends in -a without ending in -iya
Introduced in Chapter 101.

മോശം *mōśam*

bad — the opposite this book has never given you, and the one that is not built like its partner
Introduced in Chapter 89.

മുക്ക് *mūkkŭ*

nose — native Dravidian, a fourth near-perfect match across the family
Introduced in Chapter 37.

മുളക് *mulakŭ*

a chilli
Introduced in Chapter 61.

മൂന്നാം *mūnnām*

third — the long uu the whole family kept, now in the line
Introduced in Chapter 67.

മുന്നിൽ പിന്നിൽ *munnil pinnil*

in front of and behind — the horizontal pair, closing the set of four
Introduced in Chapter 84.

മുൻപ് *munpŭ*

before — a word that stands after the thing it is before, on an ending you already build
Introduced in Chapter 106.

മുണ്ട് *munṭŭ*

a mundu — the first garment the book names, after teaching the cloth it is made of
Introduced in Chapter 100.

മുപ്പത് — എൺപത് *muppatŭ — eṇpathŭ*

thirty to eighty — six words that are all the same word, and the one that has worn down
Introduced in Chapter 88.

മുറം *muram*

a winnowing tray
Introduced in Chapter 62.

മുടി *muti*

hair
Introduced in Chapter 47.

മുത്തച്ഛൻ *muttacchan*

grandfather
Introduced in Chapter 45.

മുത്തശ്ശി *muttaśśi*

grandmother

Introduced in Chapter 45.

മുതുകു് *mutukū*

the back

Introduced in Chapter 57.

നഗരം *nagaram*

a city — the ordinary modern word, beside the old one you were given long ago

Introduced in Chapter 105.

നഖം *nakham*

a nail, a claw

Introduced in Chapter 57.

നക്ഷത്രം *nakṣatram*

a star

Introduced in Chapter 53.

നാലാം *nālām*

fourth

Introduced in Chapter 67.

നാളെ കാണാം *nāḷe kāṇām*

see you tomorrow

Introduced in Chapter 4.

നല്ല *nalla*

good

Introduced in Chapter 42.

നമസ്കാരം *namaskāram*

hello / greetings (namaskāram — a making of a bow)

Introduced in Chapter 1.

ഞാൻ *ñān*

I

Introduced in Chapter 3.

ഞാൻ മലയാളം സംസാരിക്കുന്നു *ñān malayāḷam samśārikkunnu*

I speak Malayalam

Introduced in Chapter 5.

നന്ദി *nandi*

thank you (nandi — the native Dravidian word, Tamil's cousin)

Introduced in Chapter 1.

ഞങ്ങൾ / നാം *ñanñal / nām*

two words for we — one that leaves the listener out and one that takes them in

Introduced in Chapter 71.

നാട് *nāṭṭ*

home country, the place you are from

Introduced in Chapter 55.

നായ, പുച്ച *nāya, pūcca*

dog and cat — naaya continues the solid, ancient native Dravidian dog-root shared with Kannada and Tamil, no mystery; poocha matches Tamil’s everyday cat-word closely, part of the pattern where Dravidian genuinely splits on “cat” more than “dog”

Introduced in Chapter 21.

നെല്ല് *nellŭ*

unhusked rice, rice still in the husk

Introduced in Chapter 66.

നെഞ്ച് *neñcŭ*

chest — Malayalam’s other heart, native this time, and the one everyday idiom reaches for

Introduced in Chapter 38.

നീ / നിങ്ങൾ *nī / nīṇṇaḷ*

you (familiar / respectful)

Introduced in Chapter 2.

നിൽക്കൂ *nilkkū*

stand

Introduced in Chapter 43.

നിങ്ങൾക്ക് എത്ര വയസ്സുണ്ട്? *nīṇṇaḷkkŭ etra vayassuntŭ?*

how old are you? — literally “to you how much age exists?”; the SAME Sanskrit vayas word, but Malayalam adds a dative-subject + existential verb, a genuinely different shape than Kannada/Telugu’s plain possessive

Introduced in Chapter 19.

നിന്റെ പേര് എന്താണ്? *ninre pēr entāṇŭ?*

what’s your name?

Introduced in Chapter 2.

നോക്കൂ *nōkkū*

look

Introduced in Chapter 44.

നൃത്തം *nṛttam*

dance — an anusvara word, so the join is the one the book has had longest

Introduced in Chapter 99.

നൂല് *nūlŭ*

thread

Introduced in Chapter 62.

ഒമ്പതാം *ompathāṁ*

ninth — an already-built number takes the ending like any other

Introduced in Chapter 68.

ഒന്നാം *onnām*

first — and the ending that makes every ordinal in the language

Introduced in Chapter 67.

onnũ raṇṭũ mūnnũ nālũ añcũ

hear and say one to five before meeting their written forms

Introduced in Chapter 7.

ഒപ്പം *oppam̐*

together with — company, standing in the same slot the place-words stand in

Introduced in Chapter 86.

ഒരു *oru*

what ഒന്ന് becomes when a noun follows it — and the nearest thing Malayalam has to “a”

Introduced in Chapter 18.

ഒരുപക്ഷേ *orupakṣē*

perhaps

Introduced in Chapter 49.

ഒരുപാട് *orupāṭṭ*

a lot — the spoken partner of വളരെ, and the one that also works on amounts

Introduced in Chapter 79.

ഓടൂ *ōṭū*

run

Introduced in Chapter 43.

പച്ച, മഞ്ഞ *pacca, mañña*

green and yellow — *paccha* matches Tamil’s *paccai* almost exactly (the same pan-Dravidian *pac-* root already seen in *Kannada and Telugu*); *manja* is a completely separate native Dravidian root, a doublet of *manjal* (“turmeric”), matching Tamil’s own *mañcaḷ* — a third, independent solution to this arc’s recurring green/yellow puzzle

Introduced in Chapter 22.

പാൽ *pāl*

milk — native, matching Tamil exactly, and matching Kannada by the family’s regular p-to-h shift

Introduced in Chapter 39.

പഴം *palam̐*

a fruit

Introduced in Chapter 46.

പഴയ *palaya*

old — of a thing, not of a person

Introduced in Chapter 42.

പള്ളിക്കൂടം *pallickūṭani*

a school — the building named for two older buildings, and the place the teacher and the student you already know are standing in

Introduced in Chapter 103.

പല്ല് *pallũ*

a tooth

Introduced in Chapter 47.

പനി *pani*

a fever

Introduced in Chapter 63.

പാറ *pāra*

a rock

Introduced in Chapter 55.

പറയുക *parayuka*

to say, to tell — the verb this chapter’s farewell is built on, and the one the book has used without naming

Introduced in Chapter 50.

പരീക്ഷ *parīkṣa*

an exam — a Sanskrit word for looking closely at something, and one that does NOT end in the anusvara

Introduced in Chapter 103.

പശു *paśu*

a cow

Introduced in Chapter 60.

പത്താം *pathām*

tenth

Introduced in Chapter 68.

പാഠം *pāṭham*

a lesson — and a word that tells you in advance what it will do when a case ending arrives

Introduced in Chapter 103.

പതിനൊന്നാം *patinonnām*

eleventh — proof the ending was never a fact about one to ten

Introduced in Chapter 68.

പതിനൊന്ന് — ഇരുപത് *patinonnñ — irupatṭ*

11-20 — additive “ten-echo” compounds for the teens, then irupatṭ (20), transparently “two-tens” — iru (“two”) + patṭ (“ten”), matching Tamil closely
Introduced in Chapter 20.

പാതിരാ *pātirā*

midnight, built on Malayalam paathi “half” rather than Sanskrit ardha

Introduced in Chapter 17.

പാത്രം *pātram*

a vessel, a container

Introduced in Chapter 56.

പാട്ട് *pāṭṭ*

a song — and the first new word since the half-u rule that shows it doing nothing

Introduced in Chapter 99.

പാടുക *pāṭuka*

to sing — a verb whose noun is beside it rather than inside it

Introduced in Chapter 99.

പായ *pāya*

a mat

Introduced in Chapter 56.

പേര് *pēr*

name

Introduced in Chapter 2.

പെട്ടി *petṭi*

a box

Introduced in Chapter 56.

ഫോൺ *phōṇ*

a telephone — an English borrowing whose first and last letters are now familiar

Introduced in Chapter 110.

പിന്നെ *pinne*

then, after that

Introduced in Chapter 64.

പോകുക *pōkuka*

to go (and വരിക, to come)

Introduced in Chapter 4.

പോകുക *pōkuka*

to go — one stem, three tense endings, and each of the three is the entire conjugation

Introduced in Chapter 32.

പോരും *pōrum*

that will do, that is enough

Introduced in Chapter 58.

പോയി വരാം *pōyi varām*

goodbye (lit. “I’ll go and come back”)

Introduced in Chapter 4.

പ്രയാസം *prayāsam*

difficult — the other half of the pair, built in exactly the same frame

Introduced in Chapter 96.

പുക *puka*

smoke

Introduced in Chapter 59.

പുഴ *pulā*

a river

Introduced in Chapter 55.

പുല്ല് *pullŭ*

grass

Introduced in Chapter 66.

പുറപ്പെടുക *purappetuka*

to set out

Introduced in Chapter 50.

പുസ്തകം *pustakam*

a book

Introduced in Chapter 46.

പുതിയ *putiya*

new

Introduced in Chapter 42.

പൂവ് *pūvũ*

a flower

Introduced in Chapter 52.

രാജ്യം *rājyam*

a country — a word for the top of the scale that does not float, where naaTu does

Introduced in Chapter 105.

രണ്ടാം *raṇṭām*

second — and the word for ‘first’ that Malayalam’s sisters kept and it did not

Introduced in Chapter 67.

രാത്രി *rātri*

“night” — the Sanskrit tatsama already shortened inside pātirā, with a different

PIE root from Latin nox

Introduced in Chapter 24.

രാവിലെ *rāville*

“morning” (rāville) — a compound of രാവ് (rāvũ, “night,” a cognate doublet of ഇരവ്/iravũ already met in ML-C24 — same root, not literally the same word) + locative-ish suffixes -il/-e; literally built from NIGHT, not light or rising — a genuinely different strategy than Kannada’s “the shining” or Telugu’s Sanskrit “rise”; പ്രഭാതം (Sanskrit tatsama, the same prabhāta root Telugu draws on) and പുലർച്ച (native, thinner etymology) also exist as alternatives

Introduced in Chapter 26.

സഹായിക്കുക *sahāyikkuka*

to help — “to go along with somebody,” and the fourth time in two chapters that a Sanskrit word has taken an everyday job from an inherited one

Introduced in Chapter 34.

സമ്മതം *sammataṁ*

consent, an agreeing

Introduced in Chapter 65.

സംസാരിക്കൂ *saṁsārikkū*

speak

Introduced in Chapter 44.

സംസാരിക്കുക *saṁsārikkuka*

to speak, to converse

Introduced in Chapter 5.

സന്തോഷം *santōṣam*

joy / pleased to meet you

Introduced in Chapter 2.

സാരമില്ല *sāramilla*

it doesn't matter / no problem / you're welcome

Introduced in Chapter 3.

ശരി *śari*

okay / alright / correct (śari)

Introduced in Chapter 1.

സാരി *sāri*

a sari — an ഇ-final garment, so the join is the one കളി and ഭംഗി take

Introduced in Chapter 100.

ശർക്കര *śarkkara*

jaggery

Introduced in Chapter 61.

സത്യം *satyam*

true, the truth

Introduced in Chapter 49.

ശേഷം *śēṣam*

after — the partner of before, standing in the same place on the same ending

Introduced in Chapter 106.

സിനിമ *sinima*

a film, the cinema — a borrowing that arrived whole, and the case that shows which letter slides in

Introduced in Chapter 98.

ശുഭ മധ്യാഹ്നം *śubha madhyāhnam*

“good afternoon” (śubha madhyāhnam), a formal greeting built on a noon synonym rather than the everyday afternoon compound

Introduced in Chapter 31.

ശുഭ രാത്രി *śubha rātri*

“good night” — the standard Sanskrit-tatsama phrase (rātri already met, śubha new); some sources describe modern Malayalam speakers often code-switching to English “good night” instead — the same claim, similarly thinly sourced, is also made about Telugu

Introduced in Chapter 25.

ശുഭ സായാഹ്നം *śubha sāyāhnam*

“good evening” (śubha sāyāhnam) — confirmed real, used “from late afternoon until sunset” per a directly-fetched source; built on ശുഭ (ML-C25) + സായാഹ്നം (sāyāhnam), a SEPARATE Sanskrit tatsama for “evening,” Wiktionary-labeled “poetic” — NOT built on ML-C27’s native വൈകുന്നേരം; സായാഹ്നം’s own root, साय (“end”), is CONFIRMED via Wiktionary’s separate साय entry to trace to the same PIE *seh₁- as Telugu’s సాయంత్రం (sāyam) and Latin sērus* — a properly-verified cognate, not just a plausible guess
Introduced in Chapter 30.

സൂചി *sūci*

a needle

Introduced in Chapter 62.

സുഹൃത്തു *suhṛttū*

friend — Sanskrit “good-heart,” a root this chapter’s own heart-word will meet again

Introduced in Chapter 35.

സുഖം *sukham*

well-being — and the reply “സുഖമാണ്”

Introduced in Chapter 3.

സുഖമാണോ? *sukhamāṇō?*

how are you? (lit. “are you well?”)

Introduced in Chapter 3.

സുന്ദരം *sundaram*

beautiful — a new word dropped straight into the frame the last chapter built

Introduced in Chapter 97.

സുപ്രഭാതം *suprabhātami*

“good morning” (suprabhātami) — Malayalam’s actual, most common morning greeting, confirmed used in BOTH formal and informal contexts, and independently corroborated as the “most general” morning greeting by a SECOND directly-fetched source (not just one); built from su- (“good”) + പ്രഭാതം (already met, ML-C26, “morning/dawn”), NOT from ശുഭ (ML-C25’s “auspicious,” used for Malayalam’s own GREETING-GOODNIGHT) — a genuinely different Sanskrit “good” morpheme; the SAME word as Telugu’s సుప్రభాతం, but with an inverted role: PRIMARY greeting in Malayalam, only a SECONDARY alternative in Telugu (where శుభోదయం, a different root, is primary)

Introduced in Chapter 29.

സൂര്യൻ *sūryan*

the sun

Introduced in Chapter 53.

തൈര് *tairū*

curd

Introduced in Chapter 61.

തല കൈ *tala kai*

head and hand — matching Tamil's native pair almost exactly
Introduced in Chapter 13.

തലസ്ഥാനം *talasthānam*

a capital — literally a head-place, and the head in it is the one on your shoulders
Introduced in Chapter 105.

താഴെ *tāle*

below, under — the opposite of the first place-word, built the same way and spelled unlike it
Introduced in Chapter 84.

താമസിക്കുക *tāmasikkuka*

to live, to stay
Introduced in Chapter 5.

തപാൽ *tapāl*

the post — what carries the letter, and the word on the red box
Introduced in Chapter 110.

തരു *tarū*

give
Introduced in Chapter 43.

തടി *taṭi*

a trunk, timber
Introduced in Chapter 54.

തടിച്ച *taṭicca*

stout — the far end of മെലിഞ്ഞ, on another shape that still closes on -a
Introduced in Chapter 101.

തേങ്ങ *tēṇṇa*

a coconut
Introduced in Chapter 61.

തിങ്കൾ ചൊവ്വ ബുധൻ വ്യാഴം വെള്ളി ശനി ഞായർ *tinkaḷ covva*

budhan vyāzham vellī śani ṇāyar

the seven weekdays — Malayalam shares Tamil's native planet-words, being its closest cousin
Introduced in Chapter 10.

തിന്നുക *tinnuka*

to eat — the inherited Dravidian eat-word Malayalam kept as its everyday one, and the ending that tells a native verb from a borrowed one
Introduced in Chapter 32.

തീർച്ചയായും *tīrccayāyumi*

certainly, for sure
Introduced in Chapter 49.

തൊണ്ണൂറ് നൂറ് *toṇṇūrū nūrū*

ninety and a hundred — the one ten that is not built on ten, and the word hiding inside it

Introduced in Chapter 88.

തൊപ്പി *toppi*

a cap — the fourth thing worn, and the one that completes the pair of endings

Introduced in Chapter 100.

തുണി *tuṇi*

cloth

Introduced in Chapter 46.

തുറക്കുക *turakkuka*

to open — the verb the door has been waiting on since it was named

Introduced in Chapter 95.

ഉച്ച *ucca*

noon, most likely from a different Sanskrit metaphor than Kannada and Telugu — height rather than middle

Introduced in Chapter 17.

ഉച്ചകഴിഞ്ഞു *uccakaliññū*

“afternoon” (uccakaliññū) — a transparent two-word phrase, not a single dictionary headword: ഉച്ച (ML-C17’s “noon”) + കഴിഞ്ഞു, the past converb form of കഴിയുക (kalyuka, Wiktionary-confirmed Proto-Dravidian *kazi*, “to be over, spent”) — *Wiktionary itself directly shows only the finite past tense കഴിഞ്ഞു (kaliññu); the converb form used in this compound is a reasonable grammatical inference, not itself the form Wiktionary lists; literally “noon having passed” — a structurally different strategy than Telugu’s, where the SAME noon-word (మధ్యాహ്നం) simply widened its own meaning rather than compounding with a second word*

Introduced in Chapter 28.

ഉണ് *uṇ*

a meal — the noun behind ഉണ്ണുക, Malayalam’s second eat-verb, standing beside Chapter 32’s everyday തിന്നുക

Introduced in Chapter 40.

ഉണ്ട് *uṇṭū*

there is, there are, [someone] has — and ഇരിക്കുക, to be somewhere; the two-piece machine every Malayalam verb is built on

Introduced in Chapter 32.

ഉപകാരം *upakāram*

a favour, a good turn

Introduced in Chapter 51.

ഉപ്പ് *uppu*

salt

Introduced in Chapter 46.

ഉറങ്ങൂ *urāṇṇū*

sleep

Introduced in Chapter 43.

ഊര് *ūr*

town — the settled place you are from, the small end of what നാട് covers

Introduced in Chapter 80.

ഉടനെ *uṭane*

soon, right away

Introduced in Chapter 64.

ഉയരം *uyaram*

height — the noun that lets you say someone is tall without an adjective for it

Introduced in Chapter 101.

വൈദ്യൻ *vaidyan*

a doctor

Introduced in Chapter 48.

വൈകുന്നേരം *vaikunnēram*

“evening” (vaikunnēram) — native Dravidian compound, Wiktionary-glossed “latening time,” from വൈക് (vaikū, plausibly the root of വൈകുക, “to get late” — a reasonable inference, not something Wiktionary’s compound entry states outright) + -ഉം (-um) + നേരം (nēram, “time,” itself native Dravidian, not Sanskrit); Wiktionary itself ALSO lists “afternoon” as a second sense, though phrasebook sources cleanly split evening (this word) from afternoon (a separate compound built on ഉച്ച, ML-C17’s “noon,” plus കഴിഞ്ഞ്) — an honest source-tension worth flagging, not smoothing over

Introduced in Chapter 27.

വളരെ *valare*

very — the word that turns a quality up, without touching the quality word itself

Introduced in Chapter 79.

വഴി *vali*

a way, a path

Introduced in Chapter 55.

വലിയ *valiya*

big

Introduced in Chapter 42.

വന്ദനം *vandanam*

a salutation

Introduced in Chapter 51.

വന്നാൽ *vannāl*

if he comes — the conditional, built on the past form of the verb and not about the past

Introduced in Chapter 75.

വാങ്ങുക *vāṇṇuka*

to buy — the verb that turns a shop, a price and a number into something you can do

Introduced in Chapter 91.

വരുക *varuka*

to come — and the past tense, the one slot where a Malayalam verb can still surprise you

Introduced in Chapter 32.

വരുമ്പോൾ *varumpōl*

when he comes — Malayalam puts “when” on the end of the verb, not in front of the clause

Introduced in Chapter 75.

വസന്തകാലം വേനൽക്കാലം മഴക്കാലം ശൈത്യകാലം *vasantakālam venalkkālam malakkālam śaityakālam*

spring, summer, monsoon, winter — matching Tamil’s pattern of native heat/rain/cold words plus a Sanskrit “spring”

Introduced in Chapter 14.

വാതിൽ *vātil*

a door

Introduced in Chapter 52.

വായ് *vāy*

mouth — the word Chapter 33 already named, only to rule it out

Introduced in Chapter 37.

വയൽ *vayal*

a paddy field

Introduced in Chapter 55.

വയറ് *vayarŭ*

the stomach, the belly

Introduced in Chapter 47.

വായിക്കാൻ പോകുന്നു *vāyikkāṇ pōkunnu*

in order to — the -aan form in front of a second verb, saying what you are going for

Introduced in Chapter 74.

വായിക്കുക *vāyikkuka*

to read — a word that looks as though it were built on വായ്, “mouth,” and is not; the trail runs to Sanskrit വാച്, “speech”

Introduced in Chapter 33.

വേദന *vēdana*

pain

Introduced in Chapter 63.

വെള്ളം അരി ചോറ് *vellam ari cōṛ*

water (a genuinely DIFFERENT word than Tamil's), and rice raw/cooked, closely matching Tamil

Introduced in Chapter 15.

വെള്ളവും അരിയും *vellavum ariyum*

water and rice — the joining word Malayalam puts ON each item rather than between them

Introduced in Chapter 70.

വെള്ളവും അരിയും പാലും *vellavum ariyum pālum*

water and rice and milk — a longer list, and the third way the ending lands

Introduced in Chapter 70.

വേണം *vēṇam*

I want — the word this track has been naming since it taught you how to refuse

Introduced in Chapter 58.

വേണോ *vēṇō*

do you want? — the asking form, and you already own the piece that makes it

Introduced in Chapter 76.

വേണ്ട *vēṇṭa*

no need, no thank you

Introduced in Chapter 58.

വേര് *vēr*

a root

Introduced in Chapter 54.

വെയിൽ *veyil*

sunshine, the sun's heat

Introduced in Chapter 53.

വിദ്യാർത്ഥി *vidyārthi*

a student

Introduced in Chapter 48.

വില പണം *vila paṇam*

price and money — the two words the shopping scenario could not start without

Introduced in Chapter 91.

വിളക്ക് *vilakk*

a lamp

Introduced in Chapter 46.

വീണ്ടും കാണാം *vīṇḍum kāṇāmi*

we'll meet again

Introduced in Chapter 4.

വിരൽ *viral*

a finger

Introduced in Chapter 47.

വിശപ്പ് *viśappũ*

hunger

Introduced in Chapter 63.

വിശ്വാസം *viśvāsam*

trust

Introduced in Chapter 65.

വിട *viṭa*

leave, a farewell

Introduced in Chapter 50.

വിത്ത് *vittũ*

a seed

Introduced in Chapter 54.

വൃത്തി *vṛtti*

cleanliness — a Sanskrit word for how a person conducts themselves, which in Malayalam became how clean a thing is

Introduced in Chapter 107.

യാത്ര *yātra*

a journey

Introduced in Chapter 50.

Review Questions

Try these without looking ahead. Every prompt comes from the same canonical lesson data as its chapter. Answers begin in the next section.

Chapter 23

23.1 मज्झ — *the native day-word that narrowed its job*
Has Sanskrit divasam̐ erased native naal?

Chapter 69

69.1 (*reading*) — *six words, and the mark that ends them*
Which word is the flower?

69.2 (*reading*) — *six lines, two verbs*
Which verb tells you WHERE a thing is?

69.3 (*reading*) — *the first passage*
What is not here?

Answer Key

The first response is the canonical display answer. When a question accepts other authored forms, they appear underneath.

Chapter 23

23.1 നാൾ — *the native day-word that narrowed its job*

Answer: no

Also accepted: no it has not; nāl still survives; naal still survives

Chapter 69

69.1 (reading) — *six words, and the mark that ends them*

Answer: poovu

Also accepted: പുവ്; flower

69.2 (reading) — *six lines, two verbs*

Answer: undu

Also accepted: ഉണ്ടു; undü

69.3 (reading) — *the first passage*

Answer: the flower

Also accepted: പുവ്; flower

Index

Look up an English meaning, a dedicated language topic, or a chapter topic. Each linked reference opens the chapter where the material is introduced; the focus labels name only explicitly typed lesson sections.

0–9

11-20 — additive “ten-echo” compounds for the teens, then **irupatŭ** (20), transparently “two-tens” — **iru** (“two”) + **pattŭ** (“ten”), matching Tamil closely പതിനൊന്ന് — ഇരുപത് (patinonnŭ — irupatŭ)
explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 20, p. 145

A

a basket കൊട്ട (koṭṭa)

Chapter 56, p. 333

a blessing അനുഗ്രഹം (anugrahaṁ)

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a bone എല്ല (ellŭ)

Chapter 57, p. 339

a book പുസ്തകം (pustakaṁ)

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a box പെട്ടി (peṭṭi)

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a branch കൊമ്പ് (kompŭ)

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a broom ചൂല് (cūlŭ)

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a cap — the fourth thing worn, and the one that completes the pair of endings തൊപ്പി (toppi)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 100, p. 599

- a capital — literally a head-place, and the head in it is the one on your shoulders** തലസ്ഥാനം (talasthānam)
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a sandal — the footwear half of the label, next to the two garments ചെരുപ്പ് (ceruppŭ)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 100, p. 599

a sari — an ഇ-final garment, so the join is the one കളി and ഭംഗി take സാരി (sāri)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 100, p. 599

a school — the building named for two older buildings, and the place the teacher and the student you already know are standing in പള്ളിക്കൂടം (paḷḷikkūṭam)

explicit focus: usage and culture; Chapter 103, p. 623

a seed വിത്ത് (vittŭ)

Chapter 54, p. 321

a shop — the place a whole scenario has been waiting on കട (kaṭa)

Chapter 91, p. 545

a song — and the first new word since the half-u rule that shows it doing nothing പാട്ട് (pāṭṭŭ)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 99, p. 593

a star നക്ഷത്രം (nakṣatram)

Chapter 53, p. 315

a story — an അ-final word, so the glide that chapter 98 taught comes back കഥ (katha)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 99, p. 593

a student വിദ്യാർത്ഥി (vidyārtthi)

Chapter 48, p. 283

a teacher അധ്യാപകൻ (adhyāpakan)

Chapter 48, p. 283

a telephone — an English borrowing whose first and last letters

are now familiar ഫോൺ (phōṇ)

explicit focus: script; Chapter 110, p. 673

a tooth പല്ല് (pallŭ)

Chapter 47, p. 277

a tree മരം (maram)

Chapter 54, p. 321

A Tree, Part by Part

chapter topic; Chapter 54, p. 321

a trunk, timber തടി (taṭi)

Chapter 54, p. 321

a vessel, a container പാത്രം (pātram)

Chapter 56, p. 333

a way, a path വഴി (vaḷi)

Chapter 55, p. 327

a winnowing tray മുറം (muram)

Chapter 62, p. 371

after — the partner of before, standing in the same place on the

same ending ശേഷം (śeṣam)

explicit focus: grammar, usage and culture; Chapter 106, p. 645

Afternoon

chapter topic; Chapter 28, p. 171

“afternoon” (uccakaliññŭ) — a transparent two-word phrase, not a single dictionary headword: ഉച്ച (ML-C17’s “noon”) +

കഴിഞ്ഞ, the past converb form of കഴിയുക (kalyuka,

Wiktionary-confirmed Proto-Dravidian *kazī*, “to be over, spent”)

— *Wiktionary itself directly shows only the finite past tense*

കഴിഞ്ഞു (kaliññu); the converb form used in this compound is a reasonable grammatical inference, not itself the form Wiktionary

lists; literally “noon having passed” — a structurally different

strategy than Telugu’s, where the SAME noon-word (మధ్యాహ്നం)

simply widened its own meaning rather than compounding with a

second word ഉച്ചകഴിഞ്ഞ (uccakaliññŭ)

explicit focus: usage and culture; Chapter 28, p. 171

All the Way Up, and First in Time

chapter topic; Chapter 68, p. 407

an ear of ripe paddy കതിര് (katirŭ)

Chapter 66, p. 395

an eating place — a borrowed word that does not mean in Kerala what it means in English ഹോട്ടൽ (hōṭṭal)

explicit focus: usage and culture; Chapter 92, p. 551

an elephant ആന (āna)

Chapter 60, p. 359

an ember, a live coal കനൽ (kanal)

Chapter 59, p. 353

an exam — a Sanskrit word for looking closely at something, and one that does NOT end in the anusvara പരീക്ഷ (parīkṣa)

explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 103, p. 623

Animals Around a House

chapter topic; Chapter 60, p. 359

Asking For It

chapter topic; Chapter 76, p. 457

Asking Someone's Age

chapter topic; Chapter 19, p. 143

Asking Well

chapter topic; Chapter 65, p. 389

at what time? — one ending away from a question you have been able to ask since you learned the verb for asking എത്ര മണിക്കൂർ (etra maṇikkū)

explicit focus: grammar, usage and culture; Chapter 102, p. 615

B

bad — the opposite this book has never given you, and the one that is not built like its partner മോശം (mōśam)

Chapter 89, p. 533

beautiful — a new word dropped straight into the frame the last chapter built സുന്ദരം (sundaram)

Chapter 97, p. 581

Beautiful, and Not

chapter topic; Chapter 97, p. 581

beauty — and the sentence that uses it, which says

beautiful ഭംഗി (bhaṅgi)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 97, p. 581

before — a word that stands after the thing it is before, on an ending you already build മുൻപ് (munṇṇ)

explicit focus: usage and culture; Chapter 106, p. 645

Before and After

chapter topic; Chapter 106, p. 645

before the noun, unchanged — five words, one rule

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 42, p. 253

below, under — the opposite of the first place-word, built the same way and spelled unlike it താഴെ (tāle)

Chapter 84, p. 503

big വലിയ (valiya)

Chapter 42, p. 253

black, white, red, blue — Malayalam shares Tamil's native colors, and its Sanskrit blue too കറുപ്പ് വെള്ള ചുവപ്പ് നീല (karupp̣ṣ̣ vella cuvapp̣ṣ̣ nīla)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 11, p. 111

Build and Height

chapter topic; Chapter 101, p. 607

but, on the other hand എന്നാൽ (ennāl)

Chapter 64, p. 383

C

can — and it arrives at you in the dative, exactly the way

knowing does കഴിയും (kaliyumi)

explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 74, p. 443

Case Endings and Dative Subjects

chapter topic; Chapter 6, p. 79

certainly, for sure തീർച്ചയായും (tīrccayāyumi)

Chapter 49, p. 289

chest — Malayalam's other heart, native this time, and the one everyday idiom reaches for നെഞ്ച് (neñcū)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 38, p. 233

child, kid — the general word, native Dravidian, before

Malayalam narrows to son or daughter കുട്ടി (kuṭṭi)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 36, p. 219

Child, Son, Daughter

chapter topic; Chapter 36, p. 219

cleanliness — a Sanskrit word for how a person conducts themselves, which in Malayalam became how clean a thing

is വൃത്തി (vṛtti)

explicit focus: usage and culture; Chapter 107, p. 651

cloth തുണി (tuṇi)

Chapter 46, p. 271

coffee — an English colonial-era loan, itself from Arabic by way of Turkish and Italian; tea and coffee arrived by opposite

roads കാപ്പി (kāppi)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 39, p. 237

coir rope കയർ (kayar)

Chapter 62, p. 371

consent, an agreeing സമ്മതം (sammataṁ)

Chapter 65, p. 389

Counting Past Twenty

chapter topic; Chapter 88, p. 527

Courtesy

chapter topic; Chapter 51, p. 303

curd തൈര് (tairṛ)

Chapter 61, p. 365

D

dance — an anusvara word, so the join is the one the book has

had longest നൃത്തം (nṛttaṁ)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 99, p. 593

daughter — identical to Tamil’s own word, sound for sound,

closer even than the son-word മകൾ (makal)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 36, p. 219

Day

chapter topic; Chapter 23, p. 155

“day” — everyday Sanskrit divasam beside the more literary

Sanskrit dinam ദിവസം (divasaṁ)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 23, p. 155

Days of the Week

chapter topic; Chapter 10, p. 107

Describing Things

chapter topic; Chapter 42, p. 253

difficult — the other half of the pair, built in exactly the same

frame പ്രയാസം (prayāsaṁ)

Chapter 96, p. 575

do you want? — the asking form, and you already own the piece

that makes it വേണം (vēṇō)

explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 76, p. 457

Dog and Cat

chapter topic; Chapter 21, p. 149

dog and cat — naaya continues the solid, ancient native

Dravidian dog-root shared with Kannada and Tamil, no mystery;

poocha matches Tamil’s everyday cat-word closely, part of the

pattern where Dravidian genuinely splits on “cat” more than

“dog” നായ, പുച്ച (nāya, pūcca)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 21, p. 149

E

e-mail and the internet, and what you already own for saying an address out loud ഇമെയിൽ — ഇൻറർനെറ്റ് (imeyil — inrarnerrŭ)

explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 110, p. 673

ear — where three of the four sisters agree, and the fourth alone keeps the older sound ചെവി (cevi)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 37, p. 225

Easy and Difficult

chapter topic; Chapter 96, p. 575

easy — said of a thing, in a frame you have been using for most of the book എളുപ്പം (eḷuppani)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 96, p. 575

Eating Out

chapter topic; Chapter 92, p. 551

eighth — the doubled retroflex stays doubled എട്ടാം (eṭṭāṁ)

Chapter 68, p. 407

eleventh — proof the ending was never a fact about one to

ten പതിനൊന്നാം (patinonnāṁ)

explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 68, p. 407

enough, that will do മതി (mati)

Chapter 49, p. 289

Evening

chapter topic; Chapter 27, p. 169

“evening” (vaikunnēraṁ) — native Dravidian compound, Wiktionary-glossed “latening time,” from വൈക് (vaikŭ, plausibly the root of വൈകുക, “to get late” — a reasonable inference, not something Wiktionary’s compound entry states outright) + -ഉം (-uṁ) + നേരം (nēraṁ, “time,” itself native Dravidian, not Sanskrit); Wiktionary itself ALSO lists “afternoon” as a second sense, though phrasebook sources cleanly split evening (this word) from afternoon (a separate compound built on ഉച്ച, ML-C17’s “noon,” plus കഴിഞ്ഞ) — an honest source-tension worth flagging, not smoothing

over വൈകുന്നേരം (vaikunnēraṁ)

explicit focus: usage and culture; Chapter 27, p. 169

excuse me, brother — the kinship word turned into a way of calling a stranger, and the ending that turns it ചേട്ടാ (cēṭṭā)

explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 82, p. 491

eye — Proto-Dravidian, nearly identical across all four literary Dravidian languages കണ്ണ് (kaṇṇŭ)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 37, p. 225

F

Face Words

chapter topic; Chapter 37, p. 225

Family

chapter topic; Chapter 12, p. 115

Family and Friend

chapter topic; Chapter 35, p. 213

family — the collective word Chapter 12’s six people-words never needed, because each of them already named one specific person കുടുംബം (kuṭumbam)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 35, p. 213

far away — the other end of the scale, and a shape that looks like a pattern and is not one അകലെ (akale)

explicit focus: usage and culture; Chapter 81, p. 485

Farewells

chapter topic; Chapter 4, p. 51

father, mother, and four age-graded sibling words —

Malayalam’s own distinct set, still following the shared Dravidian

age-first pattern അച്ഛൻ അമ്മ ചേട്ടൻ അനിയൻ ചേച്ചി

അനിയത്തി (acchan amma cēṭṭan aniyān cēcci aniyatti)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 12, p. 115

first — and the ending that makes every ordinal in the language ഒന്നാം (onnām)

explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 67, p. 401

Five More of the Body

chapter topic; Chapter 57, p. 339

Five numerals — hide, then write

script and writing topic; explicit focus: writing; Chapter 7, p. 87

Five Words That Join

chapter topic; Chapter 64, p. 383

food — the general word this book had no room for while it was naming particular dishes ഭക്ഷണം (bhakṣaṇam)

Chapter 92, p. 551

Four Core Colours

chapter topic; Chapter 11, p. 111

fourth നാലാം (nālām)

Chapter 67, p. 401

friend — Sanskrit “good-heart,” a root this chapter’s own heart-word will meet again സുഹൃത്ത് (suhṛttṭ)

explicit focus: script, etymology; Chapter 35, p. 213

G

Games and Films

chapter topic; Chapter 98, p. 587

give തരൂ (tarū)

Chapter 43, p. 259

good നല്ല (nalla)

Chapter 42, p. 253

Good Afternoon

chapter topic; Chapter 31, p. 179

“good afternoon” (śubha madhyāhnaṁ), a formal greeting built on a noon synonym rather than the everyday afternoon

compound ശുഭ മധ്യാഹ്നം (śubha madhyāhnaṁ)

Chapter 31, p. 179

Good Evening

chapter topic; Chapter 30, p. 175

“good evening” (śubha sāyāhnaṁ) — confirmed real, used “from late afternoon until sunset” per a directly-fetched source; built on ശുഭ (ML-C25) + സായാഹ്നം (sāyāhnaṁ), a SEPARATE Sanskrit tatsama for “evening,” Wiktionary-labeled “poetic” — NOT built on ML-C27’s native വൈകുണ്ഠം; സായാഹ്നം’s own root, सय (“end”), is CONFIRMED via Wiktionary’s separate सय entry to trace to the same PIE *seh₁*- as *Telugu’s* సాయంత్రం (*sāyam*) and *Latin sērus* — a properly-verified cognate, not just a plausible guess ശുഭ സായാഹ്നം (śubha sāyāhnaṁ)

explicit focus: usage and culture; Chapter 30, p. 175

good manners മര്യാദ (maryāda)

Chapter 65, p. 389

Good Morning

chapter topic; Chapter 29, p. 173

“good morning” (suprabhātami) — Malayalam’s actual, most common morning greeting, confirmed used in BOTH formal and informal contexts, and independently corroborated as the “most general” morning greeting by a SECOND directly-fetched source (not just one); built from su- (“good”) + പ്രഭാതം (already met, ML-C26, “morning/dawn”), NOT from ശുഭ (ML-C25’s

“auspicious,” used for Malayalam’s own

GREETING-GOODNIGHT) — a genuinely different Sanskrit “good” morpheme; the SAME word as Telugu’s సుప్రభాతం, but with an inverted role: PRIMARY greeting in Malayalam, only a SECONDARY alternative in Telugu (where శుభోదయం, a different root, is primary) സുപ്രഭാതം (suprabhātami)

explicit focus: usage and culture; Chapter 29, p. 173

Good Night

chapter topic; Chapter 25, p. 163

“good night” — the standard Sanskrit-tatsama phrase (rātri already met, śubha new); some sources describe modern Malayalam speakers often code-switching to English “good night” instead — the same claim, similarly thinly sourced, is also made about Telugu శుభ రాత్రి (śubha rātri)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 25, p. 163

goodbye (lit. “I’ll go and come back”) പോയി വരാം (pōyi varām)

explicit focus: script, grammar, etymology; Chapter 4, p. 51

grandfather മുത്തച്ഛൻ (muttacchan)

Chapter 45, p. 267

grandmother മുത്തശ്ശി (muttaśśi)

Chapter 45, p. 267

Grandparents, and the Married Pair

chapter topic; Chapter 45, p. 267

grass പുല്ലു (pullū)

Chapter 66, p. 395

gratitude കൃതജ്ഞത (kṛtajñata)

Chapter 51, p. 303

Green and Yellow

chapter topic; Chapter 22, p. 153

green and yellow — paccha matches Tamil’s paccai almost exactly (the same pan-Dravidian *pac-* root already seen in *Kannada and Telugu*); manja is a completely separate native Dravidian root, a doublet of manjal (“turmeric”), matching Tamil’s own mañcaḷ — a third, independent solution to this arc’s recurring green/yellow puzzle പച്ച, മഞ്ഞ (pacca, mañña)

explicit focus: usage and culture; Chapter 22, p. 153

Greetings

chapter topic; Chapter 1, p. 1

Ground Underfoot

chapter topic; Chapter 55, p. 327

H**hair** മുടി (muṭi)

Chapter 47, p. 277

he and she — the pointing system you have for things, turned on a person അവൻ / അവൾ (avan / aval)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 71, p. 425

Head and Hand

chapter topic; Chapter 13, p. 117

head and hand — matching Tamil's native pair almost exactly തല കൈ (tala kai)

Chapter 13, p. 117

hear and say one to five before meeting their written forms onnũ

raṇṭũ mũnnũ nālũ aṇcũ

explicit focus: pronunciation, usage and culture; Chapter 7, p. 87

hear and say six to ten before meeting their written forms ārũ ēlũ

eṭṭũ ombatũ pattũ

explicit focus: pronunciation, etymology, usage and culture; Chapter 7, p. 87

Heard numbers — write without a model

script and writing topic; explicit focus: writing; Chapter 7, p. 87

heart — Sanskrit tatsama, and a genuine (if distant) cousin of the English word ഹൃദയം (hṛdayam)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 38, p. 233

height — the noun that lets you say someone is tall without an adjective for it ഉയരം (uyaram)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 101, p. 607

Held Sounds

chapter topic; Chapter 85, p. 509

hello / greetings (namaskāraṁ — a making of a bow) നമസ്കാരം (namaskāram)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 1, p. 1

here — where I am ഇവിടെ (iviṭe)

Chapter 41, p. 247

him, as an object — a full word with the ordinary ending, where English and its neighbours shrink the pronoun**instead** അവനെ (avane)

explicit focus: usage and culture; Chapter 87, p. 521

home country, the place you are from നാട് (nāṭṭ)

Chapter 55, p. 327

hour — Malayalam’s OWN dictionary tradition treats bell/hour/gem as ONE Sanskrit word, unlike Tamil’s closely related maṇi, which its own dictionaries split into two unrelated

homophones മണി (maṇi)

explicit focus: grammar, usage and culture; Chapter 18, p. 137

how എങ്ങനെ (eṅṅane)

explicit focus: script, etymology; Chapter 3, p. 39

. — how a Malayalam sentence ends

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing, usage and culture; Chapter 108, p. 659

How Are You?

chapter topic; Chapter 3, p. 39

how are you? (lit. “are you well?”) സുഖമാണോ? (sukhamāṇō?)

explicit focus: script, grammar, etymology; Chapter 3, p. 39

How Far Away

chapter topic; Chapter 81, p. 485

how far — distance as a thing you can ask for a number of, and

എത്ര lifted out of the age question എത്ര ദൂരം (etra dūraṁ)

Chapter 81, p. 485

how many rupees — the price question, built from a word freed two chapters back and numbers taught one chapter back എത്ര

രൂപ (etra rūpa)

Chapter 91, p. 545

How Much Of It

chapter topic; Chapter 79, p. 473

how old are you? — literally “to you how much age exists?”; the SAME Sanskrit vayas word, but Malayalam adds a dative-subject + existential verb, a genuinely different shape

than Kannada/Telugu’s plain possessive നിങ്ങൾക്ക് എത്ര

വയസ്സുണ്ട്? (niṅṅalkkū etra vayassuṅṭṭu?)

explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 19, p. 143

How the Body Reports

chapter topic; Chapter 63, p. 377

hunger വിശപ്പ് (viśappṭ)

Chapter 63, p. 377

husband ഭർത്താവ് (bharttāvṭ)

Chapter 45, p. 267

I

I ഞാൻ (ñān)

explicit focus: script, grammar, etymology; Chapter 3, p. 39

i- / a- / e- — six words, one machine

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 41, p. 247

'I know Malayalam' — built with no subject, because knowing happens TO you എനിക്ക് മലയാളം അറിയാം (enikkū malayāḷam ariyām)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 6, p. 79

'I like Malayalam' — a noun, a copula, and a dative; the one sentence in this book where putting yourself in the subject slot is not merely odd but impossible എനിക്ക് മലയാളം

ഇഷ്ടമാണ് (enikkū malayāḷam iṣṭamāṇṁ)

explicit focus: script, grammar, etymology; Chapter 34, p. 205

I speak Malayalam ഞാൻ മലയാളം സംസാരിക്കുന്നു (ñān malayāḷam saṁsārikkunnu)

explicit focus: script, grammar, etymology; Chapter 5, p. 61

I want — the word this track has been naming since it taught you how to refuse വേണം (vēṇam)

explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 58, p. 345

if he comes — the conditional, built on the past form of the verb and not about the past വന്നാൽ (vannāl)

explicit focus: grammar, etymology; Chapter 75, p. 449

in front of and behind — the horizontal pair, closing the set of four മുന്നിൽ പിന്നിൽ (munnil pinnil)

Chapter 84, p. 503

in order to — the -aan form in front of a second verb, saying what you are going for വായിക്കാൻ പോകുന്നു (vāyikkāṇ pōkunnu)

explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 74, p. 443

inside — and its opposite, the pair a doorway

divides അകത്ത് (akattū)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 95, p. 569

Introducing Yourself

chapter topic; Chapter 2, p. 17

is not so — the second of Malayalam's two negatives, and the one that denies what a thing IS അല്ല (alla)

explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 77, p. 461

is (the copula) ആണ് (āṇṁ)

explicit focus: script, grammar, etymology; Chapter 2, p. 17

isn't it? — the tag that invites agreement, where the question particle asks for an answer അല്ലേ (allē)

explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 77, p. 461

**it doesn't matter / no problem / you're
welcome** സാരമില്ല (sāramilla)
explicit focus: script, grammar, etymology; Chapter 3, p. 39

J

jaggery ശർക്കര (śarkkara)
Chapter 61, p. 365
Joining Things Together
chapter topic; Chapter 70, p. 419
joy / pleased to meet you സന്തോഷം (santōṣam)
explicit focus: script, etymology; Chapter 2, p. 17

K

Kerala and India — two fixed points on the scale നാട് floats
over കേരളം ഇന്ത്യ (kēraḷam indya)
Chapter 80, p. 479

L

leave, a farewell വിട (viṭa)
Chapter 50, p. 295
leg, foot കാൽ (kāḷ)
Chapter 47, p. 277
less, a shortage കുറവ് (kuravṛ)
Chapter 58, p. 345
listen കേൾക്കൂ (kēḷkkū)
Chapter 44, p. 263
look നോക്കൂ (nōkkū)
Chapter 44, p. 263

M

Made by Hand
chapter topic; Chapter 62, p. 371
**marks — an English word that put on Malayalam clothes, and
whose ending you have written many times** മാർക്ക് (mārkkū)
explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 103, p. 623
Medicine and Keeping Well
chapter topic; Chapter 107, p. 651

medicine — the thing that stands between the symptoms you

can name and the doctor you can name മരുന്ന് (marunnŭ)

explicit focus: usage and culture; Chapter 107, p. 651

midnight, built on Malayalam paathi “half” rather than Sanskrit

ardha പാതിരാ (pātirā)

Chapter 17, p. 133

milk — native, matching Tamil exactly, and matching Kannada

by the family’s regular p-to-h shift പാൽ (pāl)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 39, p. 237

more കൂടുതൽ (kūṭtāl)

Chapter 58, p. 345

More Everyday Verbs

chapter topic; Chapter 43, p. 259

More Than One

chapter topic; Chapter 93, p. 557

Morning

chapter topic; Chapter 26, p. 167

“morning” (rāville) — a compound of രാവ് (rāvŭ, “night,” a

cognate doublet of ഇരവ്/iravŭ already met in ML-C24 — same

root, not literally the same word) + locative-ish suffixes -il/-e;

literally built from NIGHT, not light or rising — a genuinely

different strategy than Kannada’s “the shining” or Telugu’s

Sanskrit “rise”; പ്രഭാതം (Sanskrit tatsama, the same prabhāta

root Telugu draws on) and പുലർച്ച (native, thinner etymology)

also exist as alternatives രാവിലെ (rāville)

explicit focus: usage and culture; Chapter 26, p. 167

mouth — the word Chapter 33 already named, only to rule it

out വായ് (vāy)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 37, p. 225

mud ചെളി (ceḷi)

Chapter 59, p. 353

my എന്റെ (enre)

explicit focus: script, etymology; Chapter 2, p. 17

my name is... എന്റെ പേര് ... ആണ് (enre pēr ... āṇŭ)

explicit focus: grammar, etymology; Chapter 2, p. 17

N

name പേര് (pēr)

explicit focus: script, etymology; Chapter 2, p. 17

near, close by — the first word this track has for measuring a

distance rather than pointing at one അടുത്ത് (aṭuttŭ)

Chapter 81, p. 485

Neither This Nor That

chapter topic; Chapter 109, p. 669

new പുതിയ (putiya)

Chapter 42, p. 253

Night

chapter topic; Chapter 24, p. 159

“night” — the Sanskrit tatsama already shortened inside pātirā, with a different PIE root from Latin nox രാത്രി (rātri)

explicit focus: usage and culture; Chapter 24, p. 159

ninety and a hundred — the one ten that is not built on ten, and the word hiding inside it തൊണ്ണൂറ് നൂറ് (tonṇūr nūr)

Chapter 88, p. 527

ninth — an already-built number takes the ending like any

other ഒമ്പതാം (ompathām)

Chapter 68, p. 407

no need, no thank you വേണ്ട (vēṇṭa)

Chapter 58, p. 345

no / there isn’t (illa — the negative) ഇല്ല (illa)

explicit focus: script, grammar, etymology; Chapter 1, p. 1

Noon and Midnight

chapter topic; Chapter 17, p. 133

noon, most likely from a different Sanskrit metaphor than

Kannada and Telugu — height rather than middle ഉച്ച (ucca)

explicit focus: usage and culture; Chapter 17, p. 133

nose — native Dravidian, a fourth near-perfect match across the family മൂക്ക് (mūkkū)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 37, p. 225

Not There, Not So

chapter topic; Chapter 77, p. 461

now ഇപ്പോൾ (ippōl)

Chapter 50, p. 295

Numbers 11–20 and Weather

chapter topic; Chapter 20, p. 145

Numbers One to Ten

chapter topic; Chapter 7, p. 87

O

oil എണ്ണ (eṇṇa)

Chapter 61, p. 365

okay / alright / correct (śari) ശരി (śari)

explicit focus: script, grammar, etymology; Chapter 1, p. 1

old — of a thing, not of a person ላላ (palaya)

Chapter 42, p. 253

On the Kitchen Shelf

chapter topic; Chapter 61, p. 365

፪ — **one character, met inside words you already say**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 2, p. 17

፫ — **one character, met inside words you already say**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 2, p. 17

፬ — **one character, met inside words you already say**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 2, p. 17

፭ — **one character, met inside words you already say**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 3, p. 39

፮ — **one character, met inside words you already say**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 4, p. 51

፯ — **one character, met inside words you already say**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 5, p. 61

፰ — **one character, met inside words you already say**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 7, p. 87

፱ — **one character, met inside words you already say**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 8, p. 99

፳ — **one character, met inside words you already say**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 9, p. 103

፳፩ — **one character, met inside words you already say**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 15, p. 125

፳፪ — **one character, met inside words you already say**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 16, p. 129

፳፫ — **one character, met inside words you already say**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 35, p. 213

One Ending, Two Sentences

chapter topic; Chapter 74, p. 443

One greeting, three afternoon strategies

etymology topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 31, p. 179

One heard greeting — write the whole

script and writing topic; explicit focus: writing; Chapter 1, p. 1

One Present, Two Englishes

chapter topic; Chapter 104, p. 631

one slot, in front — three words that fit it

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 79, p. 473

only, that much and no more ማጥፋ (mātram)

Chapter 64, p. 383

Open, Closed, In, Out

chapter topic; Chapter 95, p. 569

Opening A Conversation

chapter topic; Chapter 82, p. 491

Out in the Paddy

chapter topic; Chapter 66, p. 395

Overhead

chapter topic; Chapter 53, p. 315

P**pain വേദന (vēdana)**

Chapter 63, p. 377

perhaps ഒരുപക്ഷേ (orupakṣē)

Chapter 49, p. 289

permission അനുവാദം (anuvādam)

Chapter 65, p. 389

Places

chapter topic; Chapter 105, p. 639

Please

chapter topic; Chapter 8, p. 99

please (dayavāyi — “as a compassion,” from ദയ daya**“compassion”) ദയവായി (dayavāyi)**

explicit focus: etymology, usage and culture; Chapter 8, p. 99

Pointing, and Asking

chapter topic; Chapter 41, p. 247

price and money — the two words the shopping scenario could**not start without വില പണം (vila paṇam)**

Chapter 91, p. 545

Q**” ” — quoting, when a word is already doing it**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing, grammar; Chapter 108, p. 659

R**Reaching Somebody**

chapter topic; Chapter 110, p. 673

Reading — Words, Lines, and a First Passage

chapter topic; Chapter 69, p. 415

respect ബഹുമാനം (bahumānam)

Chapter 51, p. 303

run ഓടൂ (ōṭū)

Chapter 43, p. 259

S

salt ഉപ്പ് (uppŭ)

Chapter 46, p. 271

sand മണൽ (maṇal)

Chapter 59, p. 353

Saying When

chapter topic; Chapter 102, p. 615

School

chapter topic; Chapter 103, p. 623

Seasons

chapter topic; Chapter 14, p. 121

second — and the word for ‘first’ that Malayalam’s sisters kept and it did not രണ്ടാം (raṇṭāṁ)

explicit focus: family and cognates; Chapter 67, p. 401

see you tomorrow നാളെ കാണാം (nāḷe kāṇām)

explicit focus: script, etymology; Chapter 4, p. 51

seventh — the curled zh Malayalam and Tamil kept, held right through the ending *ēlām*

Chapter 68, p. 407

short — built exactly like ചെറിയ, and not a second word for it കുറിയ (kurīya)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 101, p. 607

Short Replies

chapter topic; Chapter 49, p. 289

Six More Short Answers

chapter topic; Chapter 58, p. 345

sixth — six to ten were a separate lesson for counting, and are not one for ordering ആറാം (ārām)

Chapter 68, p. 407

sleep ഉറങ്ങൂ (uraṇṇū)

Chapter 43, p. 259

small ചെറിയ (cerīya)

Chapter 42, p. 253

smoke പുക (puka)

Chapter 59, p. 353

sometimes ചിലപ്പോൾ (cilappōḷ)

Chapter 64, p. 383

son — Proto-Dravidian, closely matching Tamil, where Kannada softened the same root മകൻ (makan)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 36, p. 219

Songs and Stories

chapter topic; Chapter 99, p. 593

soon, right away ഉടനെ (uṭane)

Chapter 64, p. 383

Sorry

chapter topic; Chapter 9, p. 103

speak സംസാരിക്കൂ (saṁsārikkū)

Chapter 44, p. 263

spring, summer, monsoon, winter — matching Tamil’s pattern of native heat/rain/cold words plus a Sanskrit

“spring” വസന്തകാലം വേനൽക്കാലം മഴക്കാലം

ശൈത്യകാലം (vasantakālaṁ venalkkālaṁ maḷakkālaṁ śaityakālaṁ)

explicit focus: usage and culture; Chapter 14, p. 121

stand നിൽക്കൂ (nilkkū)

Chapter 43, p. 259

stout — the far end of മെലിഞ്ഞ, on another shape that still

closes on -a തടിച്ച (taṭicca)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 101, p. 607

sunshine, the sun’s heat വെയിൽ (veyil)

Chapter 53, p. 315

T

Taking, Asking, Helping, Liking

chapter topic; Chapter 34, p. 205

Taking Leave

chapter topic; Chapter 50, p. 295

tea — Chinese, carried overland through Persian and Hindi

before it ever reached Kerala ചായ (cāya)

explicit focus: grammar, etymology; Chapter 39, p. 237

Tea, Coffee, Milk

chapter topic; Chapter 39, p. 237

tea or coffee — the ending that offers a choice, built the same

way as the one that joins ചായയോ കാപ്പിയോ (cāyayō kāppiyō)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 70, p. 419

Telling Time

chapter topic; Chapter 18, p. 137

tenth പത്താം (pathām)

Chapter 68, p. 407

thank you (nandi — the native Dravidian word, Tamil’s

cousin) നന്ദി (nandi)

explicit focus: script, etymology, usage and culture; Chapter 1, p. 1

that one — the thing over there അത് (atū)

Chapter 41, p. 247

that way, just so അങ്ങനെ (aṅṅane)

Chapter 49, p. 289

that will do, that is enough പോരും (pōrum)

Chapter 58, p. 345

the back മുതുകു് (mutukū)

Chapter 57, p. 339

the bill — the end of the meal, asked for with words the shopping chapter already gave you ബിൽ (bil)

Chapter 92, p. 551

, — the comma, and the list that does not need one

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing, grammar; Chapter 108, p. 659

The Core Verbs

chapter topic; Chapter 32, p. 185

the dative suffix -ikkū, 'to / for' — and the idea of

stacking -ിക്കു് (-ikkū)

explicit focus: usage and culture; Chapter 6, p. 79

the day after tomorrow മറന്നാൾ (marannāl)

Chapter 50, p. 295

the ending that turns a dictionary verb into “to do it” — swap

-uka for -aan ആൻ (-ān)

Chapter 74, p. 443

The First Verbs

chapter topic; Chapter 5, p. 61

: () - / — the four that are left

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing, grammar; Chapter 108, p. 659

the harvest, the reaping കൊയ്ത്തു് (koyttū)

Chapter 66, p. 395

the held consonant — a doubled letter is a longer sound

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar, usage and culture; Chapter 85, p. 509

The Leg and the Tooth

chapter topic; Chapter 47, p. 277

? — the mark you have been reading all along

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing, grammar; Chapter 108, p. 659

The Marks on the Page

chapter topic; Chapter 108, p. 659

The Meal

chapter topic; Chapter 40, p. 243

The Mind and the Page

chapter topic; Chapter 33, p. 197

the moon ചന്ദ്രൻ (candran)

Chapter 53, p. 315

the neck കഴുത്തു് (kaluttū)

Chapter 57, p. 339

the pattern drawn at a doorway കോലം (kōlam)

Chapter 52, p. 309

The People in the Sentence

chapter topic; Chapter 71, p. 425

the post — what carries the letter, and the word on the red box തപാൽ (tapāl)

Chapter 110, p. 673

the quotative ennu, which turns a whole sentence into the thing that is said എന്ന് (ennū)

explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 72, p. 431

the same marker with think, know and ask — one word opening four verbs the book already taught എന്ന് ചിത്തിക്കുന്നു (ennū cintikkunnu)

explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 72, p. 431

the seven weekdays — Malayalam shares Tamil's native planet-words, being its closest cousin തിങ്കൾ ചൊവ്വ ബുധൻ വ്യാഴം വെള്ളി ശനി ഞായർ (tiṅkaḷ covva budhan vyāzham velli śani ṇāyar)

explicit focus: usage and culture; Chapter 10, p. 107

the sky ആകാശം (ākāśam)

Chapter 53, p. 315

the stomach, the belly വയറ് (vayarū)

Chapter 47, p. 277

the sun സൂര്യൻ (sūryan)

Chapter 53, p. 315

The Thing Said

chapter topic; Chapter 72, p. 431

The Traditional Months

chapter topic; Chapter 16, p. 129

the twelve months of the Malayalam (Kollam Era) solar calendar — also solar, like Tamil's, but named for ZODIAC SIGNS rather than nakshatras ചിങ്ങം കന്നി തുലാം വൃശ്ചികം ധനു മകരം കുംഭം മീനം മേടം ഇടവം മിഥുനം കർക്കടകം (ciṅṅam kanni tulāṁ vṛścikam dhanu makaram kumbham mīnam mēṭam iṭavam mithunam karkkaṭakam)

explicit focus: usage and culture; Chapter 16, p. 129

The Two Hearts

chapter topic; Chapter 38, p. 233

the written because, which carries the whole question word

inside it എന്തുകൊണ്ടെന്നാൽ (entukoṇṭennāl)

explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 73, p. 437

then, after that പിന്നെ (pinne)

Chapter 64, p. 383

there is, there are, [someone] has — and ഇരിക്കുക, to be somewhere; the two-piece machine every Malayalam verb is built on ഉണ്ട് (untũ)

explicit focus: pronunciation, grammar, etymology; Chapter 32, p. 185

there — where I am not അവിടെ (aviṭe)

Chapter 41, p. 247

they — and, about one person, the respectful he or she, by the trick you met in chapter two അവർ (avar)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 71, p. 425

thin, of a person — an adjective that ends in -a without ending in -iya മെലിഞ്ഞ (meliñña)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 101, p. 607

Things About the House

chapter topic; Chapter 56, p. 333

Things You Ask For

chapter topic; Chapter 46, p. 271

third — the long uu the whole family kept, now in the line മുന്നാം (mūnnāṁ)

Chapter 67, p. 401

thirty to eighty — six words that are all the same word, and the one that has worn down മുപ്പത് — എൺപത് (muppatũ — eṇpathũ)

explicit focus: usage and culture; Chapter 88, p. 527

this one — the thing near me ഇത് (itũ)

Chapter 41, p. 247

thread നൂല് (nūlũ)

Chapter 62, p. 371

Three heard numbers — write their numerals

script and writing topic; explicit focus: writing; Chapter 7, p. 87

tiredness ക്ഷീണം (kṣīṇaṁ)

Chapter 63, p. 377

to ask — a Sanskrit word for pushing that walked into a gap Malayalam had made by narrowing its own inherited verb to “hear” ചോദിക്കുക (cōdikkuka)

explicit focus: script, etymology; Chapter 34, p. 205

to buy — the verb that turns a shop, a price and a number into something you can do വാങ്ങുക (vāñṇuka)

Chapter 91, p. 545

to close — the other half of the pair, and the form you would put on a sign അടയ്ക്കുക (aṭaykkuka)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 95, p. 569

to come — and the past tense, the one slot where a Malayalam verb can still surprise you വരുക (varuka)

explicit focus: pronunciation, grammar, etymology; Chapter 32, p. 185

to drink — the verb four drinks in this book have been waiting for കുടിക്കുക (kuṭikkuka)

Chapter 85, p. 509

to eat — the inherited Dravidian eat-word Malayalam kept as its everyday one, and the ending that tells a native verb from a borrowed one തിന്നുക (tinnuka)

explicit focus: pronunciation, grammar, etymology; Chapter 32, p. 185

to go (and വരിക, to come) പോകുക (pōkuka)

explicit focus: script, etymology; Chapter 4, p. 51

to go — one stem, three tense endings, and each of the three is the entire conjugation പോകുക (pōkuka)

explicit focus: pronunciation, grammar, etymology; Chapter 32, p. 185

to help — “to go along with somebody,” and the fourth time in two chapters that a Sanskrit word has taken an everyday job from an inherited one സഹായിക്കുക (sahāyikkuka)

explicit focus: script, etymology; Chapter 34, p. 205

to know — the verb inside എനിക്ക് മലയാളം അറിയാം, and the one that will not let you be the subject അറിയുക (ariyuka)

explicit focus: pronunciation, grammar; Chapter 32, p. 185

to live, to stay താമസിക്കുക (tāmasikkuka)

explicit focus: script, grammar, etymology; Chapter 5, p. 61

to open — the verb the door has been waiting on since it was named തുറക്കുക (turakkuka)

Chapter 95, p. 569

to play — the game word with a verb ending you have had since long before this chapter കളിക്കുക (kaḷikkuka)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 98, p. 587

to read — a word that looks as though it were built on വായ്, “mouth,” and is not; the trail runs to Sanskrit വാച്, “speech” വായിക്കുക (vāyikkuka)

explicit focus: script, etymology; Chapter 33, p. 197

to say, to tell — the verb this chapter’s farewell is built on, and the one the book has used without naming പറയുക (parayuka)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 50, p. 295

to see — the family’s shared see-root, kept as Malayalam’s everyday word, and the mood endings that share one slot with tense കാണുക (kāṇuka)

explicit focus: pronunciation, grammar, etymology; Chapter 32, p. 185

to set out പുറപ്പെടുക (purappeṭuka)

Chapter 50, p. 295

to sing — a verb whose noun is beside it rather than inside it പാടുക (pāṭuka)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 99, p. 593

to speak, to converse സംസാരിക്കുക (saṁsārikkuka)

explicit focus: script, grammar, etymology; Chapter 5, p. 61

to take — native to the bone, yet ending in -കുക like the borrowings; the letter that actually does the stamping is the

ഇ എടുക്കുക (eṭukkuka)

explicit focus: script, grammar, etymology; Chapter 34, p. 205

to think — a Sanskrit noun turned into a verb by the same

-ഇക്കുക that made ക്ഷമിക്കുക, and the first of four verbs about what happens inside a head ചിന്തിക്കുക (cintikkuka)

explicit focus: script, grammar, etymology; Chapter 33, p. 197

to understand — literally “to put it in the mind,” a three-piece word you can take apart by ear, with a second form that hands

the understanding to you instead മനസ്സിലാക്കുക (manassilākkuka)

explicit focus: script, grammar, etymology; Chapter 33, p. 197

to work (lit. “work-do”) ജോലി ചെയ്യുക (jōli ceyyuka)

explicit focus: script, grammar, etymology; Chapter 5, p. 61

to write — the same word as Tamil எழுது, carrying the ൭ that only these two sisters kept, and the chapter’s closing count of

four എഴുതുക (eḷutuka)

explicit focus: script, etymology; Chapter 33, p. 197

today — the day you are standing in, and the first of three words that place an event without a calendar ഇന്ന് (innŭ)

Chapter 94, p. 563

together with — company, standing in the same slot the place-words stand in ഒപ്പം (oppaṁ)

Chapter 86, p. 515

town — the settled place you are from, the small end of what നാട് covers ഊര് (ūrŭ)

Chapter 80, p. 479

treatment — the borrowed word for the practice, beside the native word for the substance ചികിത്സ (cikitsa)

explicit focus: etymology, usage and culture; Chapter 107, p. 651

true, the truth സത്യം (satyaṁ)

Chapter 49, p. 289

trust വിശ്വാസം (viśvāsaṁ)

Chapter 65, p. 389

Two heard beats — write them

script and writing topic; explicit focus: writing; Chapter 1, p. 1

Two Kinds Of With

chapter topic; Chapter 86, p. 515

two words for we — one that leaves the listener out and one that takes them in ഞങ്ങൾ / നാം (ñanṇaḷ / nāṁ)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 71, p. 425

U

unhusked rice, rice still in the husk നെല്ല് (nellŭ)

Chapter 66, p. 395

V

Verbs of Seeing and Saying

chapter topic; Chapter 44, p. 263

very — the word that turns a quality up, without touching the quality word itself വളരെ (vaḷare)

Chapter 79, p. 473

W

water (a genuinely DIFFERENT word than Tamil’s), and rice raw/cooked, closely matching Tamil വെള്ളം അരി ചോറ് (vellam ari cōrŭ)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 15, p. 125

Water and Rice

chapter topic; Chapter 15, p. 125

water and rice and milk — a longer list, and the third way the ending lands വെള്ളവും അരിയും പാലും (vellavum ariyum pālum)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 70, p. 419

water and rice — the joining word Malayalam puts ON each item rather than between them വെള്ളവും അരിയും (vellavum ariyum)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 70, p. 419

we’ll meet again വീണ്ടും കാണാം (vīṇḍum kāṇām)

explicit focus: script, etymology; Chapter 4, p. 51

weather — a Sanskrit compound literally meaning “state of TIME”: kaala (“time”) + avastha (“state, condition”) — a real echo of Spanish’s tiempo meaning both “time” AND

“weather” കാലാവസ്ഥ (kālavastha)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 20, p. 145

Welcoming a Guest

chapter topic; Chapter 52, p. 309

well-being — and the reply “സുഖമാണ്” സുഖം (sukham)

explicit focus: script, etymology; Chapter 3, p. 39

what എന്ത് (entŭ)

explicit focus: script, etymology; Chapter 2, p. 17

What It Costs

chapter topic; Chapter 91, p. 545

what’s your name? നിന്റെ പേര് എന്താണ്? (ninre pēr entāṇṁ?)

explicit focus: grammar, etymology; Chapter 2, p. 17

What the Air Carries

chapter topic; Chapter 59, p. 353

What You Think Of It

chapter topic; Chapter 89, p. 533

What You Wear

chapter topic; Chapter 100, p. 599

what ഒന്ന് becomes when a noun follows it — and the nearest thing Malayalam has to “a” ഒരു (oru)

explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 18, p. 137

When, and If

chapter topic; Chapter 75, p. 449

when he comes — Malayalam puts “when” on the end of the verb, not in front of the clause വരുമ്പോൾ (varumpōl)

explicit focus: grammar, etymology; Chapter 75, p. 449

when? — the third of a set you already own two thirds of എപ്പോൾ (eppōl)

explicit focus: grammar, etymology; Chapter 75, p. 449

Where A Thing Is

chapter topic; Chapter 84, p. 503

where? — asking about a place എവിടെ (eviṭe)

Chapter 41, p. 247

where from? — the question you have been asked since the ground words, now askable and answerable എവിടെ നിന്ന് (eviṭe ninnŭ)

Chapter 83, p. 497

where the weight falls — stress, and why it matters less here

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 85, p. 509

Where You Are From

chapter topic; Chapter 80, p. 479

Where You Came From

chapter topic; Chapter 83, p. 497

which greeting, and when — five you own, one rule you do not

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 82, p. 491

Which One in the Line

chapter topic; Chapter 67, p. 401

who? — asking about a person ആര് (ārŭ)

Chapter 41, p. 247

Who It Happens To

chapter topic; Chapter 87, p. 521

Who Someone Is

chapter topic; Chapter 48, p. 283

Whose It Is

chapter topic; Chapter 78, p. 467

Why, and Because

chapter topic; Chapter 73, p. 437

why — the word for what, with the ending that means “by means of” എന്തുകൊണ്ട് (entukonṭṭ)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 73, p. 437

wife ഭാര്യ (bhārya)

Chapter 45, p. 267

wind കാറ്റ് (kārrṭ)

Chapter 59, p. 353

with, alongside — the everyday partner of ഒപ്പം, and the same register split you met with the degree words കൂടെ (kūṭe)

Chapter 86, p. 515

write എഴുതൂ (eḷutū)

Chapter 44, p. 263

Y**yes (athe — “that [is so]”) അതെ (athe)**

explicit focus: script, grammar, etymology; Chapter 1, p. 1

yesterday — the day behind you, built visibly on the word for today ഇന്നലെ (innale)

explicit focus: etymology; Chapter 94, p. 563

Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow

chapter topic; Chapter 94, p. 563

you (familiar / respectful) നീ / നിങ്ങൾ (nī / ninṇaḷ)

explicit focus: script, grammar, etymology; Chapter 2, p. 17

(you) should forgive / sorry (kṣamikkaṇaṁ — from kṣamikkuka “to forgive,” Sanskrit kṣama + necessitative**-aṇaṁ) ക്ഷമിക്കണം (kṣamikkaṇaṁ)**

explicit focus: usage and culture; Chapter 9, p. 103

Other**അ — one character, met inside words you already say**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 1, p. 1

അധ്യാപകനെ (adhyāpakane) — who it happens to

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 87, p. 521

അധ്യാപകനും വൈദ്യനും അല്ല — neither of them is what you called it

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 109, p. 669

അധ്യാപകന്റെ (adhyāpakanre) — “the teacher’s”

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar, etymology; Chapter 78, p. 467

അമ്മയുടെ (ammayute) — “mother’s”

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 78, p. 467

ആ — one character, met inside words you already say

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 2, p. 17

ഇ — one character, met inside words you already say

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 3, p. 39

ഇത് സുന്ദരമല്ല (itū sundaramalla) — this is not beautiful

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 97, p. 581

ഇപ്പോൾ ഞാൻ പോകുന്നു — right now, I am going

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 104, p. 631

ഇപ്പോൾ ഞാൻ വരുന്നു — and there is no word for *am*

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 104, p. 631

ഇരുപത്തിയൊന്ന് (irupattiyonnū) — twenty-one

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 88, p. 527

ഇരവ് / ഇരുൾ — two native words, two jobs

etymology topic; Chapter 24, p. 159

ഉ — one character, met inside words you already say

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 4, p. 51

ഊ — one character, met inside words you already say

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 31, p. 179

എ — one character, met inside words you already say

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 2, p. 17

ഏ · ഴ — two letters unlock the second row

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 7, p. 87

ഏഴ് — hide, then write

script and writing topic; explicit focus: writing; Chapter 7, p. 87

ഒ — one new letter unlocks five familiar words

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 7, p. 87

ഓ — one character, met inside words you already say

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 3, p. 39

ക — one character, met inside words you already say

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 6, p. 79

കുട്ടികൾ (kuṭṭikaḷ) — children

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 93, p. 557

കത്തിയാൽ (kattiyāl) — by means of

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar, usage and culture; Chapter 86, p. 515

കേരളത്തിൽ (kēraḷattil) — what -ം does before an ending

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 83, p. 497

ഗ — one character, met inside words you already say

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 39, p. 237

ച — one character, met inside words you already say

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 5, p. 61

ചേച്ചി (cēcci) — excuse me, sister

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 82, p. 491

ചായയും കാപ്പിയും ഇല്ല — neither of them is here

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 109, p. 669

ജ — one character, met inside words you already say

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 5, p. 61

ഞ — one character, met inside words you already say

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 5, p. 61

ഞാൻ പോകുന്നു — I go, and I am going

grammar topic; explicit focus: usage and culture; Chapter 104, p. 631

ഞാൻ വായിക്കുന്ന പുസ്തകം — the book I read

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 90, p. 539

ട — one character, met inside words you already say

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 13, p. 117

ഠ — one character, met with the word that needs it

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 103, p. 623

ണ — one character, met inside words you already say

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 2, p. 17

ത — one character, met inside words you already say

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 13, p. 117

തിങ്കളാഴ്ച ഞാൻ പോകും — on Monday I will go

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar, usage and culture; Chapter 102, p. 615

തിങ്കളാഴ്ച രണ്ട് മണിക്ക് — on Monday at two o'clock

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 102, p. 615

ഥ — one character, met inside words you already say

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 37, p. 225

ദ — one character, met inside words you already say

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 20, p. 145

ന — one character, met inside words you already say

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 10, p. 107

ന • മ — two sounds you already heard

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 1, p. 1

നിന്ന് (ninnŭ) — from

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 83, p. 497

നമ — one delayed copy

script and writing topic; explicit focus: writing; Chapter 1, p. 1

നമ — one guided copy

script and writing topic; explicit focus: writing; Chapter 1, p. 1

നമസ്കാരം — every shape is already yours

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 1, p. 1

നല്ലത് (nallatŭ) — a good one

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 89, p. 533

നല്ലതാണ് എന്ന് ഞാൻ ചിന്തിക്കുന്നു — I think it is good

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 89, p. 533

നാളെ ഞാൻ പോകും (nāḷe ñān pōkum) — tomorrow I will go

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 94, p. 563

നാൾ — the native day-word that narrowed its job

etymology topic; Chapter 23, p. 155

പ — one character, met inside words you already say

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 2, p. 17

പോകുന്ന (pōkunna) — that goes

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 90, p. 539

പുസ്തകം വായിക്കുന്നു — the ending a book does not take

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 87, p. 521

പുസ്തകങ്ങൾ (pustakaṅṅaḷ) — books

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 93, p. 557

ഫ — one character, met with the word that needs it

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 110, p. 673

ഭ — one character, met inside words you already say

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 25, p. 163

മ — one character, met inside words you already say

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 11, p. 111

മുകളിൽ (mukaḷil) — on top of

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 84, p. 503

യ — one character, met inside words you already say

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 5, p. 61

ഓ • ര • ഓ — finish the sound inventory

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 1, p. 1

ര — one character, met inside words you already say

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 6, p. 79

രണ്ട് പുസ്തകം (raṇṭṭ pustakam) — two books

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 93, p. 557

രണ്ട് മണിക്ക് — at two o'clock

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar, usage and culture; Chapter 102, p. 615

റ — one character, met inside words you already say

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 2, p. 17

ല — one character, met inside words you already say

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 5, p. 61

ഴ — one character, met inside words you already say

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 14, p. 121

വ — one character, met inside words you already say

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 4, p. 51

വന്ന (vanna) — that came

grammar topic; explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 90, p. 539

ഷ — one character, met inside words you already say

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 18, p. 137

സ — one character, met inside words you already say

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 21, p. 149

സ . ് . ക — **build ska without a leap**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 1, p. 1

സത്തൊഷം — **copy one known word with help**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 2, p. 17

സത്തൊഷം — **one delayed copy**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: writing; Chapter 3, p. 39

ഹ — **one character, met inside words you already say**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 5, p. 61

൧ . ൨ . ൩ — **three numeral shapes**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 7, p. 87

൧ ൨ ൩ ൪ ൫ — **one visible copy**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: writing; Chapter 7, p. 87

൪ . ൫ — **finish the first five numerals**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 7, p. 87

൬ . ൭ . ൮ — **three more numeral shapes**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 7, p. 87

൬ ൭ ൮ ഹ ധ — **one supported copy**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: writing; Chapter 7, p. 87

൯ . ധ — **nine and ten**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 7, p. 87

ൺ — **one character, met inside words you already say**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 2, p. 17

ൻ — **one character, met inside words you already say**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 5, p. 61

ൽ — **one character, met inside words you already say**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 5, p. 61

ൾ — **one character, met inside words you already say**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 2, p. 17