

Malayalam

The United Nations recommended system was approved in 1972 (II/11) and amended in 1977 (III/12), based on a report prepared by D. N. Sharma. The tables and their corrections were published in volume II of the conference reports^{1,2}.

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

Malayalam (Malayālam) uses an alphasyllabic script whereby each character represents a syllable rather than one sound. Vowels and diphthongs are marked in two ways: as independent characters (used syllable-initially) and in an abbreviated form, to denote vowels after consonants. The romanization table is unambiguous but now outdated because since the 1970's a new orthography has been introduced and the use of many character combinations and ligatures has been simplified. Nevertheless the user of the romanization table would have to recognize many ligatures not given in the original table. The system is mostly reversible but there exist some ambiguities in the romanization of vowels (independent vs. abbreviated characters) and consonants (ligatures vs. character sequences), particularly in the case of older orthography.

Romanization

The romanization system below is based on the new orthography, with notes where appropriate on the older spelling. The table of ligatures has been added.

I. Independent vowel characters

1	അ	a	6	ഊ	ū	11	ഓ	ō
2	ആ	ā	7	ഋ	r̄	12	ഔ	o
3	ഇ	i	8	എ	ě	13	ഌ	au
4	ഈ	ī	9	ഏ	e			
5	ഉ	u	10	ഐ	ai			

II. Abbreviated vowel characters (S stands for any consonant character)

1	S	a	6	Sു	ū ^B	11	Sൊ	ō
2	Sാ	ā	7	Sൃ	r̄ ^C	12	Sഔ	o
3	Sി	i	8	Sെ	ě	13	Sഌ	au ^D
4	Sീ	ī	9	Sേ	e			
5	Sു	u ^A	10	Sൈ	ai			

^A Traditional script forms: ക്കു kku, മു mu, etc., exceptionally: കു ku (കു kku, കു űku), ഗു gu, ചു chhu, ജു ju, ണു nu, തു tu, നു nu (നു nnu), ഭു bhū, രു ru, ശു shu, ഹു hu.

^B Traditional script forms: ക്കു kġū, മു mġū, etc., exceptionally: ക്കു kġū, ഗു gġū, ചു chhġū, ജു jġū, ണു nġū, തു tġū, നു nġū, ഭു bhġū, രു rġū, ശു shġū, ഹു hġū.

^C Traditionally written in conjunction with the consonant character: കൃ kr.

^D In the older spelling: ക്കു.

III. Other symbols (S stands for any consonant character)

- 1 So m̄
- 2 Sː ħ
- 3 Ṣ ^(A)

^A Indicates absence of the inherent short [a] vowel, e.g. ക്ക ḳ, സ്സ് ṣ. Special, co-called *chillu*-forms of consonants with that symbol: ണ̣ ṇ, ന̣ ṇ, ര̣ ṛ, ല̣ ḷ, ശ̣ ṣ̣.

IV. Consonant characters

1 ക ka	14 ഡ ḍha	27 ര ra
2 ച kha	15 ണ ṇa	28 ല la
3 ഗ ga	16 ത ta	29 വ va
4 ഘ gha	17 ഡ tha	30 ശ sha
5 ണ ṇa	18 ദ da	31 ഷ ṣha
6 ച cha	19 ഡ dha	32 സ sa
7 ഛ chha	20 ന na	33 ഹ ha
8 ജ ja	21 പ pa	34 ക്ഷ kṣha
9 ഝ jha	22 ഫ pha	35 ള ḷa
10 ഞ ṅa	23 ബ ba	36 ഴ ḷa
11 ട ṭa	24 ഭ bha	37 റ ra ^A
12 റ ṭha	25 മ ma	
13 ഡ ḍa	26 യ ya	

^A Special ligature: റ്റ ṭ̣.

V. Ligatures

Adscript forms of some consonants

Example

r- ര്ഗ് rgga (newer style; earlier a dot above the next character was used instead of ൾ)

-r (ക kra (traditional script form: ക്ര))

-y ത്യ tya

-v സ്വ sva

Other ligatures (the list is not complete; availability depends on the fonts used)

ക	ക്ക	കത	ക്ഷ	ക്ല	ഗ്ഗ	ഗ്ദ	ഗ്ദ്ധ	ഗ്ന	ഗ്മ	ഗ്ല	ക
kka	kṭa	kta	kṣha	kla	gga	gda	gddha*	gna	gma	gla	ṅka
ഞ	ച്ച	ച്ഛ	ജ	ജത	ഞ്ച	ഞ്ചര	ഞ്ച	ഞത	ട്ട	സ്സ	ണ്ട
ṅṅa	chcha	chchha	jja	jña	ñcha	ñchha*	ñja*	ñña	ṭṭa	ḍḍa	ṇṇa
ന്ത	ന്ധ	ന്ധ	ന്മ	ന്ത	ന്ഥ	ന്ത	ന്ത	ന്ത	ന്ത	ന്ത	ന്ത
nṭha*	nda	nṇa	nma	tta	ttha	tna*	tbha	tma	tsa	dda	ddha
ന്ത	ന്ഥ	ന്ദ	ന്ധ	ന്മ	ന്ത	ന്ത	ന്ത	ന്ത	ന്ത	ന്ത	ന്ത
nta	ntha	nda	ndha	nna	nma	nra	pta*	pna*	ppa	pla	psa*
ബ	ബ	ബ	ബ	ബ	ബ	ബ	ബ	ബ	ബ	ബ	ബ
bda	bdha	bba	bla	mna*	mpa	mma	mḷa	yka*	yka	yta*	yta*
യ	യ	യ	യ	യ	യ	യ	യ	യ	യ	യ	യ
ypa*	ypa*	ypa	lka*	lkka*	lpa	lma*	lla	vva	shcha	shla	shsha
ഷ	ഷ	ഷ	ഷ	ഷ	ഷ	ഷ	ഷ	ഷ	ഷ	ഷ	ഷ
ṣhka*	ṣhṭa	ṣhṭha*	ṣhṇa*	ṣhpa*	ṣhpha*	ṣhma*	ska*	sṭa	sta*	stha	sna*
സ്	സ്	സ്	സ്	സ്	സ്	സ്	സ്	സ്	സ്	സ്	സ്
spa*	spha*	sma*	sla	ssa	hna	hma	hla	ḷḷa	ḷka*	ḷcha*	ḷtta*
ഴ	ഴ										
ḷma*	ḷpa*										

Many of the ligatures, especially those marked with the asterisk are thought to be obsolete since the introduction of the new spelling and have been replaced by a combination of two consonant characters, the first of which bears the ̣ diacritic, e.g. പ്ന *pna*. However, the usage of ligatures in different sources varies greatly.

Other systems of romanization

For differences between the UN system and the **ISO transliteration standard ISO 15919: 2001** see the section on the romanization of Hindi.

The **State of Kerala** seems to use a regular pattern for rendering their geographical names. At least the following correspondences may be noted:

UN	State of Kerala
ḷ	= zh
sh	= s
t	= th
ṭ	= t or d

References

1. *Second United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names*. London, 10–31 May 1972. Vol. II. *Technical papers*. United Nations. New York 1974, pp. 149–150.
2. *Third United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names*. Athens, 17 August – 7 September 1977. Vol. II, *Technical papers*, pp. 393 etc.