

## 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<sup>1,2</sup>.

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 The romanization table is unambiguous but now outdated because since the 1970's a new orthography has been introduced and the use of many character combinations and ligatures has been simplified.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	ഒ	ō
2	ആ	ā	7	ഋ	r̄	12	ഓ	o
3	ഇ	i	8	എ	ě	13	ഔ	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 <sup>B</sup>	11	Sൊ	ō
2	Sാ	ā	7	Sൃ	r̄ <sup>C</sup>	12	Sോ	o
3	Sി	i	8	Sെ	ě	13	Sൗ	au <sup>D</sup>
4	Sീ	ī	9	Sേ	e			
5	Sു	u <sup>A</sup>	10	Sൈ	ai			

<sup>A</sup> Traditional script forms: **ഖു** khu, **മു** mu, etc., exceptionally: **കു** ku (**കു** kku, **കു** nku), **ഗു** gu, **ചു** chhu, **ജു** ju, **ണു** nu, **തു** tu, **നു** nu (**ന്നു** nnu), **ഭു** bhu, **രു** ru, **ശു** shu, **ഹു** hu.

<sup>B</sup> Traditional script forms: **ഖൂ** khū, **മൂ** mū, etc., exceptionally: **കൂ** kū, **ഗൂ** gū, **ചൂ** chhū, **ജൂ** jū, **ണൂ** nū, **തൂ** tū, **നൂ** nū, **ഭൂ** bhū, **രൂ** rū, **ശൂ** shū, **ഹൂ** hū.

<sup>C</sup> Traditionally written in conjunction with the consonant character: **ക്ര** kr.

<sup>D</sup> In the older spelling: **ഈ**.

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

1 **So** ṁ

2 **S:** ḥ

3 **Ṣ** (A)

<sup>A</sup> Indicates absence of the inherent short [a] vowel, e.g. **ക̣** ḳ, **സ̣** ṣ. Special, co-called *chillu*-forms of consonants with that symbol: **ണ̣** ṇ̇, **ന̣** ṇ̣, **ര̣** ṛ̣, **ൽ̣** ḷ̣, **ശ̣** ṣ̣.

### IV. Consonant characters

1 **ക** ka

2 **ഖ** kha

3 **ഗ** ga

4 **ഘ** gha

5 **ങ** ṅa

6 **ച** cha

7 **ചു** chha

8 **ജ** ja

9 **ജ** jha

10 **ഞ** ña

11 **ട** ṭa

12 **ഠ** ṭha

13 **ഡ** ḍa

14 **ഢ** ḍha

15 **ണ** ṇa

16 **ത** ta

17 **ഥ** tha

18 **ദ** da

19 **ധ** dha

20 **ന** na

21 **പ** pa

22 **ഫ** pha

23 **ബ** ba

24 **ഭ** bha

25 **മ** ma

26 **യ** ya

27 **ര** ra

28 **ല** la

29 **വ** va

30 **ശ** sha

31 **ഷ** ṣha

32 **സ** sa

33 **ഹ** ha

34 **ക്ഷ** kṣha

35 **ള** ḷa

36 **ഴ** ṣa

37 **റ** ṛa<sup>A</sup>

<sup>A</sup> Special ligature: **റ** ṛ̣.

## V. Ligatures

Adscript forms of some consonants

Example

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

-r ക്ര 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	കട	കത	ക്ഷ	ക്ല	ഗ്	ഗ്ദ	ഗ്ദ്ധ	ഗ	ഗമ	ഗ്ല	ക
kka	kṭa	kta	kṣha	kla	gga	gda	gddha*	gna	gma	gla	ṅka
ഞ	ച്ച	ച്ഛ	ജ	ജത	ഞ്ച	ഞ്ചര	ഞ്ജ	ഞ്ഞ	ട്ട	ഡ്	ണ്ട
ṅna	chcha	chchha	jja	jña	ñcha	ñchha*	ñja*	ñña	ṭta	ḍḍa	ṇṭa
ണ്	ണ്യ	ണ്ണ	ഞ്ച	ത്ത	മ്മ	ത്ന	ത	ത	ത്വ	ദ	ദ്ധ
ṇṭha*	ṇḍa	ṇṇa	ṇma	tta	ttha	tna*	tbha	tma	tsa	dda	ddha
ന്ത	ന്മ	ന്ദ	ന്ധ	ന്ന	ന്മ	ന്റ	പ്ത	പ്ന	പ്പ	പ്ല	പ്സ
nta	ntha	nda	ndha	nna	nma	nra	pta*	pna*	ppa	pla	psa*
ബ്	ബ്ധ	ബ്ബ	ബ്ല	മ്ന	മ്പ	മ്മ	മ്ല	യ്ക	യ്ക്ക	യ്ത	യ്ത
bda	bdha	bba	bla	mna*	mpa	mma	m̥la	yka*	yka	yta*	yta*
യ്പ	യ്മ	യ്യ	ല്ക	ല്ക്ക	ല്പ	ല്മ	ല്ല്	വ്	വ്ശ	ല്ശ	ല്ശ
ypa*	yma*	yya	lka*	lkka*	lpa	lma*	lla	vva	shcha	shla	shsha
ഷ്ക	ഷ്ട	ഷ്ഠ	ഷ്ണ	ഷ്പ	ഷ്മ	ഷ്മ	സ്ക	സ്ത	സ്ത	സ്ഥ	സ്ന
ṣhka*	ṣhṭa	ṣhṭha*	ṣhṇa*	ṣhpa*	ṣhpha*	ṣhma*	ska*	sṭa	sta*	stha	sna*
സ്പ	സ്ഫ	സ്ഥ	സ്ത	സ്ത	ഹ	ഹ	ഹ്	ള	ഴ്ക	ഴ്ച	ഴ്ത
spa*	spha*	sma*	sla	ssa	hna	hma	hla	lla	lka*	lcha*	lta*
ഴ്മ	ഴ്പ										
lma*	lpa*										

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.