

# Numerals



*Licence plate of an automobile with Kannada and European numerals*

*Cardinal numbers – ordinal numbers – numerals and persons – fractions – inclusive expressions – ‘hundreds of’*

## Cardinal numbers

In comparison to the numerals in the modern Indo-European languages of north India, those in the Dravidian languages are comfortably systematic and therefore relatively easy to learn.

The numerical system shows traces of what originally appears to have been not a decimal, but an octal system, with original names for the numbers one through eight, a word for ‘ten’, and a word for ‘nine’ that etymologically translates as ‘one less than ten’. There are words for hundred and thousand, but then the parallel to the European system stops. There is no word for ‘million’ or ‘billion’; instead, there is a word for a unit of one hundred thousand, *lakṣa* (what in Indianized English is commonly called ‘lakh’), and a word for a unit of ten millions, *kōṭi* (what in Indianized English is called ‘crore’).<sup>1</sup>

ಒಂದು	<i>oṃdu</i>	one
ಎರಡು	<i>eraḍu</i>	two
ಮೂರು	<i>mūru</i>	three
ನಾಲ್ಕು	<i>nālku</i>	four
ಐದು	<i>aidu</i>	five

ಆರು	<i>āru</i>	six
ಏಳು	<i>ēlu</i>	seven
ಎಂಟು	<i>eṃtu</i>	eight
ಒಂಬತ್ತು	<i>oṃbattu</i>	nine
ಹತ್ತು	<i>hattu</i>	ten

All these numerals are nouns meaning '[number] (of things)' and can be declined following to the pattern of *adu*:

ಒಂದು	<i>oṃdu</i>	one (nominative / accusative)
ಒಂದನ್ನು	<i>oṃdannu</i>	one (specific accusative)
ಒಂದರಿಂದ	<i>oṃdariṃda</i>	from one
ಒಂದಕ್ಕೆ	<i>oṃdakke</i>	to one
ಒಂದರ	<i>oṃdara</i>	of one
ಒಂದರಲ್ಲಿ	<i>oṃdaralli</i>	in one
ಎರಡನ್ನು	<i>eraḍannu</i>	two (specific accusative)
ಮೂರಕ್ಕೆ	<i>mūrakke</i>	to three
ನಾಲ್ಕರ	<i>nālkara</i>	of four
ಐದರಿಂದ	<i>aidariṃda</i>	from five
ಆರಲ್ಲಿ	<i>āraralli</i>	in six

Often, though, these inflected forms of the numerals must be translated in special idiomatic manners:

ಅಲ್ಲಿ ಕೆಲವು ಮರಗಳು ಇವೆ. ಐದರಲ್ಲಿ ಹಣ್ಣುಗಳು ಕಾಣಿಸುತ್ತವೆ.	<i>alli kelavu maragaḷu ive. aidaralli haṇṇugaḷu kāṇisuttave.</i>	There are a few trees over there. Fruits can be seen in five of them.
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ನಾಲ್ಕರಿಂದ ಹಣ್ಣುಗಳು ಬಿದ್ದಿವೆ.	<i>nāḷkarimda haṇṇugaḷu biddive.</i>	Fruits have fallen from four of them.
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Expressions such as the above are rather rare in modern practice. These inflected forms are mostly used in arithmetical expressions:<sup>2</sup>

ಅದರಿಂದ ಒಂದನ್ನು ಕಳೆ	<i>adarimda oṃdu kaḷe</i>	deduct one from that
ಆರಕ್ಕೆ ಎರಡನ್ನು ಕೂಡಿಸು	<i>āraḷke eraḍannu kūḍisu</i>	add two to six
ಮೂರನ್ನು ನಾಲ್ಕರಿಂದ ಗುಣಿಸು	<i>mūrannu nāḷkarimda guṇisu</i>	multiply three by four
ನೂರನ್ನು ಇಪ್ಪತ್ತರಿಂದ ಭಾಗಿಸು	<i>nūrannu ippattarimda bhāgisu</i>	divide one hundred by twenty

The numerals eleven to nineteen demand some attention. Note that when 'one' or 'two' is added to 'ten' of a multiple of ten, *hattu* becomes *hann(u)*, and that when 'three' to 'eight' is added, *hattu* becomes *hadi(n)*:

ಹನ್ನೊಂದು	<i>hannoṃdu</i>	eleven
ಹನ್ನೆರಡು	<i>hannerāḍu</i>	twelve
ಹದಿಮೂರು	<i>hadimūru</i>	thirteen
ಹದಿನಾಲ್ಕು	<i>hadināḷku</i>	fourteen
ಹದಿನೈದು	<i>hadinaidu</i>	fifteen
ಹದಿನಾರು	<i>hadināru</i>	sixteen
ಹದಿನೇಳು	<i>hadinēḷu</i>	seventeen
ಹದಿನೆಂಟು	<i>hadineṃṭu</i>	eighteen
ಹತ್ತೊಂಬತ್ತು	<i>hattombattu</i>	nineteen

After that, the higher numerals are as follows:<sup>3</sup>

ಇಪ್ಪತ್ತು	<i>ippattu</i>	twenty
ಇಪ್ಪತ್ತೊಂದು	<i>ippattoṃdu</i>	twenty-one

ಇಪ್ಪತ್ತೆರಡು	<i>ippatteraḍu</i>	twenty-two
ಇಪ್ಪತ್ತಮೂರು	<i>ippattamūru</i> <sup>4</sup>	twenty-three
ಇಪ್ಪತ್ತನಾಲ್ಕು	<i>ippattanāḷku</i>	twenty-four
ಇಪ್ಪತ್ತೈದು	<i>ippattaidu</i>	twenty-five
ಇಪ್ಪತ್ತಾರು	<i>ippattāru</i>	twenty-six
ಇಪ್ಪತ್ತೇಳು	<i>ippattēḷu</i>	twenty-seven
ಇಪ್ಪತ್ತೆಂಟು	<i>ippattēṁṭu</i>	twenty-eight
ಇಪ್ಪತ್ತೊಂಬತ್ತು	<i>ippattōṁbattu</i>	twenty-nine
ಮೂವತ್ತು	<i>mūvattu</i> <sup>5</sup>	thirty
ನಾಲ್ವತ್ತು	<i>nālvattu</i> <sup>6</sup>	forty
ಐವತ್ತು	<i>aivattu</i>	fifty
ಅರವತ್ತು	<i>aravattu</i>	sixty
ಎಪ್ಪತ್ತು	<i>eppattu</i>	seventy
ಎಂಬತ್ತು	<i>eṁbattu</i>	eighty
ತೊಂಬತ್ತು	<i>toṁbattu</i>	ninety
ನೂರು	<i>nūru</i>	hundred
ಇನ್ನೂರು	<i>innūru</i>	200
ಮುನ್ನೂರು	<i>munnūru</i>	300
ನಾನೂರು	<i>nānūru</i>	400
ಐನೂರು	<i>ainūru</i>	500
ಆರುನೂರು	<i>ārunūru</i>	600
ಏಳುನೂರು	<i>ēḷunūru</i>	700
ಎಂಟುನೂರು	<i>eṁṭunūru</i>	800
ಒಂಬತ್ತಿನೂರು	<i>ōṁbainūru</i>	900
ಸಾವಿರ	<i>sāvira</i>	1000

When smaller numbers are added to higher units (hundreds, thousands, etc.), the connection between the higher and lower elements in the numeral is indicated by the genitive case:

ನೂರ ನಲ್ವತ್ತೊಂದು	<i>nūra nalvattoṃdu</i>	141
ಸಾವಿರದ ಒಂಬೈನೂರ	<i>sāvirada oṃbainūra</i>	1995
ತೊಂಬತ್ತೈದು	<i>toṃbattaidu</i>	

The Indian digits<sup>7</sup> also have distinctive Kannada forms. In recent times they have regained popularity and are used almost as frequently as the modern, European equivalents:

೧	೨	೩	೪	೫	೬	೭	೮	೯	೦
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0

## Ordinal numbers

Ordinals are made by adding the suffix *-aneyya* to a cardinal number:

ಒಂದು	<i>oṃdu</i>	one	ಒಂದನೆಯ	<i>oṃdaneya</i>	first
ಐದು	<i>aidu</i>	five	ಐದನೆಯ	<i>aidaneya</i>	fifth
ನೂರು	<i>nūru</i>	one hundred	ನೂರನೆಯ	<i>nūraneya</i>	one-hundredth

An alternative word for 'first' is ಮೊದಲನೆಯ *modalaneya*, derived from ಮೊದಲು *modalu* 'beginning'.

Occasionally, especially when in modern narrative literature the author tries to reproduce colloquial language, one may find the shortened forms in *anē* or *ane*: *oṃdanē* / *oṃdane*, *ippattanē* / *ippattane*, etc.

The ordinal numbers, being attributive words, can be pronominalized by means of the usual suffixes:

ಒಂದನೆಯದು	<i>oṃdaneyadu</i>	the first one
ಹತ್ತನೆಯವನು	<i>hattaneyavanu</i>	the tenth man

These new words can of course be declined, like any pronoun or pronominalized word:

ಐದನೆಯದರಲ್ಲಿ	<i>aidaneyadaralli</i>	in the fifth one
ಹತ್ತನೆಯವನಿಗೆ	<i>hattaneyavanige</i>	to the tenth man
ಅಲ್ಲಿ ಏಳು ಚೀಲಗಳು ಇವೆ. ನಾಲ್ಕನೆಯದರಲ್ಲಿ ಸೇಬುಗಳು ಇವೆ.	<i>alli ēḷu cilagaḷu ive.</i> <i>nālkaneyadaralli</i> <i>sēbugaḷu ive.</i>	There are seven bags over there. The fourth one contains apples [lit.: in the fourth one there are apples].
ಎಷ್ಟು ಮಂದಿ ಒಳಗೆ ಬರುತ್ತಾರೆ ಎಂದು ನೋಡಿರಿ. ನೂರನೆಯವರು ಬಂದಾಗ ಉಳಿದವರನ್ನು ಬೇರೆ ಕಡೆಗೆ ಕಳುಹಿಸಿರಿ.	<i>eṣṭu maṁdi oḷage</i> <i>baruttāre emdu nōḍiri.</i> <i>nūraneyavaru</i> <i>baṁdāga uḷidavarannu</i> <i>bēre kaḍege kaḷuhisiri.</i>	See how many people come in. When the one-hundredth person has come, send the remaining persons somewhere else.

## Numerals and persons

When things are counted and their number is indicated by a numeral, the numeral is simply placed before the noun to which it refers, and all necessary suffixes are added to the following noun.

ನಾಲ್ಕು ಪುಸ್ತಕಗಳು	<i>nālku pustakagaḷu</i>	four books
ಮೆರವಣಿಗೆ ಮೂರು ಬೀದಿಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಸಾಗಿತು.	<i>meravaṇige mūru</i> <i>bidigaḷalli sāgitu.</i>	The procession went through three streets.

Colloquially, the plural suffix *-gaḷu* may be omitted when referring to things.

ಆ ನಾಲ್ಕು ಪುಸ್ತಕ ಬೇಕು.	<i>ā nālku pustaka bēku.</i>	[I] need those four books.
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In most cases, however, the plain numerals are not used with nouns that refer to persons. In such cases, a **classifier**, i.e., an additional word meaning 'person' is usually placed in between the numeral and the noun. This additional word can be *jana* or *maṁdi*.

ಅಲ್ಲಿ ಐದು ಮಂದಿ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳು ನಿಂತಿದ್ದಾರೆ.	<i>alli aidu maṁdi vidyārthigaḷu niṁtiddāre.</i>	Four students are standing there.
ಹತ್ತು ಜನ ಗಿರಾಕಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಹಣ್ಣು ಮಾರಿದ್ದಾನೆ.	<i>hattu jana girākigalige haṇṇu māriddāne.</i>	He has sold fruits to ten customers.

Alternatively, up to the count of five, one can use pronominalized short forms of numerals.

ಒಬ್ಬನು	<i>obbanu</i>	one [male] person
ಒಬ್ಬಳು	<i>obbaḷu</i>	one [female] person
ಒಬ್ಬರು	<i>obbaru</i>	one person [politely, or neutral]
ಇಬ್ಬರು	<i>ibbaru</i>	two persons
ಮೂವರು	<i>mūvaru</i>	three persons
ನಾಲ್ವರು	<i>nālvuru</i>	four persons
ಐವರು	<i>aivuru</i>	five persons

With numbers of persons larger than two, constructions like *mūru jana* ‘three [persons]’ are preferred.

## Fractions

The common word for ‘half’ is a loanword from Sanskrit: ಅರ್ಧ *ardha*. At a fruit seller’s stall one typically asks, for instance, ಒಂದರ್ಧ ಕೆಜಿ ಕಿತ್ತಳೆಹಣ್ಣು ಕೊಡಿ *oṁdardha kēji kittāḷehaṇṇu koḍi* ‘please give [me] a half kilogram [‘k.g.’] of oranges’. In larger numbers with a half (two and a half, three and a half, etc.), the Dravidian ಅರೆ *are* is used to build a compound, and a final *u* of the preceding numeral is never elided: ಎರಡುವರೆ *eraḍuvare* ‘two and a half’, ಐದುವರೆ *aiduvare* ‘five and a half’, etc.

The word for ‘quarter’ is ಕಾಲು *kālu*. For smaller fractions a number and the Sanskrit word ಭಾಗ *bhāga* ‘part’ is used (*eṁṁṁṁṁṁ bhāga* ‘one eighth’, etc.).<sup>8</sup>

The common word for 'percent' is ಶೇಕಡಾ *śēkaḍā*: ಶೇಕಡಾ ಹತ್ತು *śēkaḍā hattu* '10%'.

### Inclusive expressions: 'all [x] of them'

To stress that a statement applies to all of the items that have been indicated by means of a numeral, the inclusive suffix *ū* is added to the numeral or to the pronominalized numeral.

ಇಬ್ಬರೂ ಬರಬಹುದು.	<i>ibbarū barabahudu.</i>	Both of them may come.
ಇಬ್ಬರಿಗೂ ಹೇಳಿದೆನು.	<i>ibbarigū hēḷidenu</i>	I told both of them.
ಸಂಗ್ರಹಾಲಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಮೂರು ಚಿತ್ರಗಳನ್ನು ನೋಡಿದ್ದೇನೆ. ಮೂರೂ ಚೆನ್ನಾಗಿವೆ.	<i>saṅgrahālayadalli mūru citraḡaḷannu nōḍiddēne. mūrū cennāgive.</i>	I have seen three pictures in the museum. All three of them are nice.

### 'Hundreds of', 'thousands of'

When one wishes to say something about an indefinitely large number of several dozens ('tens'), several hundreds, several thousands of something, one uses the idiomatic expressions ಹತ್ತಾರು *hattāru*, ನೂರಾರು *nūrāru*, ಸಾವಿರಾರು *savirāru*:

ಮೇಜಿನ ಮೇಲೆ ಹತ್ತಾರು ಪುಸ್ತಕಗಳು ಇದ್ದವು	<i>mējina mēle hattāru pustakagaḷu iddavu</i>	there were dozens of books on the table
ಬೀದಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ನೂರಾರು ಜನ ಇದ್ದರು	<i>bīdiyalli nūrāru jana iddaru</i>	there were hundreds of people in the street
ಅವನು ಸಾವಿರಾರು ರೂಪಾಯಿ ಖರ್ಚು ಮಾಡಿದ	<i>avanu sāvīrāru rūpāyi kharcu māḍida</i>	he spent thousands of rupees

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The word 'lakh' is derived from the originally Sanskrit *lakṣa* through the Middle Indian (Prakrit) form *lakkha*, which in later stages of development in north India turned to *lākha*. 'Crore' is from the Hindustani *kaṛora*, of unclear derivation. These numerals are found in Sanskrit (as the Kannada words, which are Sanskrit loanwords, indicate) and all across India.

<sup>2</sup> These examples have been taken from Kushalappa Gowda 1991: 167.

<sup>3</sup> The multiples of ten are combinations of shortened forms of units and the word for 'ten'. The *ir* in *ippattu* etc. is, historically, a shortened form of *eraḍu* (cf. the word for 'two' in cognate languages like Tamil: *iraṇṭu*). Two alternatives exist for 'thirty': *muvvattu* and *mūvattu*, and for *nalvattu* 'forty' one also finds *nālvattu*.

<sup>4</sup> One can also hear and read *ippattumūru*, *ippattunālku*, and for 'forty-four' the alternatives are *nalavattanālku*, *nālvattunālku*, *nalvatnālku* etc. Cf. also Kittel 1903: 252 (§278).

<sup>5</sup> *muvvattu* is also heard and read.

<sup>6</sup> *nalavattu* and *nālvattu* are also heard and read.

<sup>7</sup> The so-called 'Arabic numerals' of the Western world are, of course, not Arabic but Indian in origin.

<sup>8</sup> The older expressions *arekālu* for 'one eighth' ('half of a quarter') and *vīse* 'one sixteenth' (cf. Spencer 1950: 385) are nowadays practically no longer in use.

