

Strong or ‘Irregular’ Verbs



The great statue of Narasiṃha at Hampi

There is only one verb in the Kannada language that can be called ‘irregular’ in that some of the inflected forms do not follow a pattern that is shared with any other verb, and this one verb is *iru* ‘to be’ in the present and past tense (this has been discussed in lesson 2).

As has already been mentioned in lesson 5, the ‘irregularness’ of an irregular verb concerns those verb forms that are derived from the past tense stem. These are (a) the past tense, (b) the gerund (see lesson 12), (c) the past relative participle (lesson 6), (d) the conditional (and its derivative, the concessional: lesson 18), and (e) the potential mood (lesson 17). If one knows the stem for the past tense, one can derive all these forms regularly.

The ‘irregularness’ can, to some extent, be compared to the irregularness of the so-called ‘strong verbs’ in the Germanic languages: for instance, when one compares the English verb forms *sweep – swept – swept* and *keep – kept – kept*, one notices that also among such ‘irregular’ verbs, some regular patterns emerge. Exactly the same is the case in Kannada. For instance, there are verbs of which the root ends in *i* or *e* but of which the past stem is formed not by means of the suffix *du*, as one ordinarily would expect, but *tu*:

ಅರಿ	<i>ari</i>	to know	ಅರಿತೆನು	<i>aritenu</i>	I knew
ಕಲಿ	<i>kali</i>	to learn	ಕಲಿತೆನು	<i>kalitenu</i>	I learnt
ಮರೆ	<i>mare</i>	to forget	ಮರೆತೆನು	<i>maretenu</i>	I forgot

The gerunds of these verbs are *aritu, kalitu, maretu*; the past relative participles are *arita, kalita, mareta*; the conditionals are *aritare, kalitare, maretare*; and the first person singular in the potential mood for these verbs ('I may know', etc.) is *aritēnu, kalitēnu, maretēnu*. Apart from the usual *d* being a *t*, the modifications that lead to these different verb forms are the same as for the regular verbs of the *i/e* class (verbs like the paradigmatic *kare*).

Another category of irregular verbs lose the final *u* of the root and add the thematic *d* immediately after the remaining consonant:

ಎನ್ನು	<i>ennu</i>	to say	ಎಂದೆನು	<i>eṁḍenu</i>	I said
ತಿನ್ನು	<i>tinnu</i>	to eat	ತಿಂದೆನು	<i>tiṁḍenu</i>	I ate
ಬಯ್ಯು	<i>bayyu</i>	to abuse / revile	ಬಯ್ದೆನು	<i>bayḍenu</i>	I abused / reviled

These are roots which originally, in Old Kannada, ended in a consonant (*en, tin, bay*, etc.). The gerunds are *eṁḍu, tiṁḍu, bayḍu*; the past relative participles are *eṁḍa, tiṁḍa, bayḍa*; the conditionals are *eṁḍare, tiṁḍare, bayḍare*; and the first person singular in the potential mood for these verbs ('I may say', etc.) is *eṁḍēnu, tiṁḍēnu, bayḍēnu*.

Other roots originally ended in a consonant but drop this consonant before the following suffix:

ಕಾಯು	<i>kāyu</i>	to wait	ಕಾದೆನು	<i>kāḍenu</i>	I waited
ಕುಳಿರು	<i>kulīru</i>	to sit down	ಕುಳಿತೆನು	<i>kulītenu</i>	I sat down
ಸೋಲು	<i>sōlu</i>	to lose / be defeated	ಸೋತೆನು	<i>sōtenu</i>	I lost / was defeated
ಸೀನು	<i>sīnu</i>	to sneeze	ಸೀತೆನು	<i>sītenu</i>	I sneezed

It should be noticed here that in the case of some of these verbs, more than one possible past stem can be made. E.g., besides the form *kāḍenu* one also finds *kāyḍenu*, and besides *sītenu* the form *sīṁḍenu* also exists.¹

The following lists of strong verbs are not meant to be exhaustive, but gives examples of types of 'irregularness'.²

Two verbs are doubly irregular:

Class I:

ಆಗು	<i>āgu</i>	to become			
ಆಗಿ	<i>āgi</i>	(gerund)	ಆದೆನು	<i>ādenu</i>	I became
ಹೋಗು	<i>hōgu</i>	to go			
ಹೋಗಿ	<i>hōgi</i>	(gerund)	ಹೋದೆನು	<i>hōdenu</i>	I went

In the case of the two above verbs, the gerund is formed regularly, as though they were ordinary *u*-class verbs, but the past stem is after the pattern of *kāyu* etc.³

Once this form is known, the finite forms for the past tense, and the past relative participle and the conditional can be formed as usual, by adding the appropriate endings:

<i>kalitu</i>	having learnt	<i>kalitenu</i>	I learnt	<i>kalitare</i>	if (one) learns
<i>maretu</i>	having forgotten	<i>maretenu</i>	I forgot	<i>maretare</i>	if (one) forgets

(etc.)

In the following tables, only the roots and the forms of the gerund are given.

Class II: gerund ending in *tu*

ಅರಿ	<i>ari</i>	to know	ಅರಿತು	<i>aritu</i>
ಎಸೆ	<i>ese</i>	to throw	ಎಸೆತು	<i>esetu</i>
ಕಲಿ	<i>kali</i>	to learn	ಕಲಿತು	<i>kalitu</i>
ಕುರಿ	<i>kuri</i>	to aim	ಕುರಿತು	<i>kuritu</i>
ಕುಸಿ	<i>kusi</i>	to sink down / collapse	ಕುಸಿತು	<i>kusitu</i>
ಕೊಳೆ	<i>koḷe</i>	to rot	ಕೊಳೆತು	<i>koḷetu</i>

ಚಳಿ	<i>caḷi</i>	to be tired	ಚಳಿತು	<i>caḷitu</i>
ದೊರೆ	<i>dore</i>	to be obtained	ದೊರೆತು	<i>doretu</i>
ಬೆಸೆ	<i>bese</i>	to solder	ಬೆಸೆತು	<i>besetu</i>
ಮರೆ	<i>mare</i>	to forget	ಮರೆತು	<i>maretu</i>
ಮಸೆ	<i>mase</i>	to whet	ಮಸೆತು	<i>masetu</i>
ಮೊಳೆ	<i>moḷe</i>	to sprout	ಮೊಳೆತು	<i>moḷetu</i>
ಹುಸಿ	<i>husi</i>	to speak falsehood / lie	ಹುಸಿತು	<i>husitu</i>

Class IIIa: originally consonantal roots, gerund ending in *du* or *tu*

ಎನ್ನು	<i>ennu</i>	to say	ಎಂದು	<i>eṇḍu</i>
ತಿನ್ನು	<i>tinnu</i>	to eat	ತಂದು	<i>tiṇḍu</i>
ಆಯು	<i>āyu</i>	to choose	ಆಯ್ದು	<i>āydu</i>
ಒಯ್ಯು	<i>oyyu</i>	to carry off	ಒಯ್ದು	<i>oydu</i>
ಕಾಯು	<i>kāyu</i>	to wait / grow hot	ಕಾಯ್ದು	<i>kāydu</i>
ಕೊಯ್ಯು	<i>koyyu</i>	to reap, pluck	ಕೊಯ್ದು	<i>koydu</i>
ಗೆಯ್ಯು	<i>geyyu</i>	to make	ಗೆಯ್ದು	<i>geydu</i>
ತೇಯು	<i>tēyu</i>	to grind	ತೇಯ್ದು	<i>teydu</i>
ತೊಯ್ಯು	<i>toyru</i>	to become wet	ತೊಯ್ದು	<i>toydu</i>
ಬಯ್ಯು	<i>bayru</i>	to revile	ಬಯ್ದು	<i>baydu</i>
ಮಾಯು	<i>māyu</i>	to be hidden	ಮಾಯ್ದು	<i>māydu</i>
ಮೇಯು	<i>mēyu</i>	to graze	ಮೇಯ್ದು	<i>mēydu</i>
ಸುಯ್ಯು	<i>suyru</i>	to sigh	ಸುಯ್ದು	<i>suydu</i>
ಹಾಯು	<i>hāyu</i>	to cross over	ಹಾಯ್ದು	<i>hāydu</i>
ಕವಲು	<i>kavalu</i>	to become branched	ಕವಲ್ತು	<i>kavaltu</i>
ಚಿಗುರು	<i>ciguru</i>	to sprout	ಚಿಗುರ್ತು	<i>cigurtu</i>
ಬೆವರು	<i>bevaru</i>	to perspire	ಬೆವರ್ತು	<i>bevartu</i>

Alternative forms for some of the verbs in this class are *ādu*, *kādu*, *gēdu*, *mādu*, *mēdu*, *hādu*, *ciguri*, *bevari*.

Class IIIb: with elision of the original final consonant

ಕುಳಿರು	<i>kuḷiru</i>	to sit down	ಕುಳಿತು	<i>kuḷitu</i>
ನಾರು	<i>nāru</i>	to stink	ನಾತು	<i>nātu</i>
ಸೋಲು	<i>sōlu</i>	to be defeated	ಸೋತು	<i>sōtu</i>
ಹೇಲು	<i>hēlu</i>	to pass excrement ⁴	ಹೇತು	<i>hētu</i>

Class IIIc: the original final consonant of the root is changed

ಇರು	<i>iru</i>	to be	ಇದ್ದು	<i>iddu</i>
ತೆರು	<i>teru</i>	to pay	ತೆತ್ತು	<i>tettu</i>
ಬೇಸರು	<i>bēsaru</i>	to be bored	ಬೇಸತ್ತು	<i>bēsattu</i>
ಹೆರು	<i>heru</i>	to give birth	ಹೆತ್ತು	<i>hettu</i>
ಹೊರು	<i>horu</i>	to bear a burden	ಹೊತ್ತು	<i>hottu</i>
ತರು	<i>taru</i>	to bring	ತಂದು	<i>taṁdu</i>
ಬರು	<i>baru</i>	to come	ಬಂದು	<i>baṁdu</i>
ಕೊಲ್ಲು	<i>kollu</i>	to kill	ಕೊಂದು	<i>koṁdu</i>
ಗೆಲ್ಲು	<i>gellu</i>	to win, overcome	ಗೆದ್ದು	<i>geddu</i>
ನಿಲ್ಲು	<i>nillu</i>	to stand	ನಿಂತು	<i>nimtu</i>
ಅಳು	<i>aḷu</i>	to weep	ಅತ್ತು	<i>attu</i>
ಉಳು	<i>uḷu</i>	to plough	ಉತ್ತು	<i>uttu</i>
ಎಳು	<i>ēḷu</i>	to rise	ಎದ್ದು	<i>eddu</i>
ಕಳು	<i>kaḷu</i>	to steal	ಕದ್ದು	<i>kaddu</i>
ಕೀಳು	<i>kīḷu</i>	to pluck, pick	ಕಿತ್ತು	<i>kittu</i>
ಬೀಳು	<i>bīḷu</i>	to fall	ಬಿದ್ದು	<i>biddu</i>

(Note the shortening of the vowel in the case of the two last-mentioned verbs.)

In this class, the verbs *baru* and *taru* are partly irregular: the 2nd person singular imperative is ಬಾ *bā* 'come!' and ತಾ *tā* 'bring!', and in the 3rd person singular neuter imperfect, besides the more regular ಬಂದಿತು *baṁditu* 'it came', the shortened form ಬಂತು *baṁtu* is more common.

Class IV: originally monosyllabic verbs with long vowels

ನೋಯು	<i>nōyu</i>	to be in pain	ನೊಂದು	<i>noṃdu</i>
ಬೇಯು	<i>bēyu</i>	be burnt	ಬೆಂದು	<i>beṃdu</i>
ಮೀಯು	<i>mīyu</i>	to bathe	ಮಿಂದು	<i>miṃdu</i>
ಈ	<i>ī</i>	to give ⁵	ಇತ್ತು	<i>ittu</i>
ಸಾಯು	<i>sāyu</i>	to die ⁶	ಸತ್ತು	<i>sattu</i>

Class V: verb roots ending in retroflex consonants that change the following consonant of the ending

ಅಡು	<i>aḍu</i>	to cook	ಅಟ್ಟು	<i>aṭṭu</i>
ಇಡು	<i>iḍu</i>	to place, put	ಇಟ್ಟು	<i>iṭṭu</i>
ಉಡು	<i>uḍu</i>	to dress	ಉಟ್ಟು	<i>uṭṭu</i>
ಕೆಡು	<i>keḍu</i>	to be spoilt	ಕೆಟ್ಟು	<i>keṭṭu</i>
ಕೊಡು	<i>koḍu</i>	to give	ಕೊಟ್ಟು	<i>koṭṭu</i>
ತೊಡು	<i>toḍu</i>	to dress	ತೊಟ್ಟು	<i>toṭṭu</i>
ನೆಡು	<i>neḍu</i>	to plant	ನೆಟ್ಟು	<i>neṭṭu</i>
ಪಡು	<i>paḍu</i>	to experience	ಪಟ್ಟು	<i>paṭṭu</i>
ಬಿಡು	<i>biḍu</i>	to leave	ಬಿಟ್ಟು	<i>biṭṭu</i>
ಸುಡು	<i>suḍu</i>	to burn	ಸುಟ್ಟು	<i>suṭṭu</i>
ಹೊರಡು	<i>horaḍu</i>	to set out	ಹೊರಟ್ಟು	<i>horaṭṭu</i>
ಉಣ್ಣು	<i>uṇṇu</i>	to eat	ಉಂಡು	<i>uṃḍu</i>
ಕಾಣು	<i>kāṇu</i>	to see	ಕಂಡು	<i>kaṃḍu</i>
ಕೊಳ್ಳು	<i>koḷḷu</i>	to take, obtain	ಕೊಂಡು	<i>koṃḍu</i>

Class VI: verbs ending in a guttural, to which the beginning consonant of the ending is assimilated

ನಗು	<i>nagu</i>	to laugh	ನಕ್ಕು	<i>nakku</i>
ಸಿಗು	<i>sigu</i>	to be found ⁷	ಸಿಕ್ಕು	<i>sikku</i>

ಹೊಗು	<i>hogu</i>	to enter	ಹೊಕ್ಕು	<i>hokku</i>
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Alternative abbreviated forms:

ಒದೆ	<i>ode</i>	to kick	ಒದೆದು, <i>odedu,</i> ಒದ್ದು <i>oddu</i>
ಕದಿ	<i>kadi</i>	to steal	ಕದಿದು, <i>kadidu,</i> ಕದ್ದು <i>kaddu</i>
ಹೊದೆ	<i>hode</i>	to put on (dress)	ಹೊದೆದು, <i>hodedu,</i> ಹೊದ್ದು <i>hoddu</i>

A few common verbs have special alternative abbreviated forms of the gerund when used in combination with the auxiliary verb *koḷḷu*:

ಎಳೆ	<i>eḷe</i>	to pull	ಎಳಕೊಳ್ಳು <i>eḷakoḷḷu</i>
ಕರೆ	<i>kare</i>	to call	ಕರಕೊಳ್ಳು <i>karakoḷḷu</i>
ತಿಳಿ	<i>tiḷi</i>	to understand	ತಿಳಕೊಳ್ಳು <i>tiḷakoḷḷu</i>
ಮಲಗು	<i>malagu</i>	to lie down	ಮಲಕೊಳ್ಳು <i>malakoḷḷu</i>
ತೆಗೆ	<i>tege</i>	to take	ತೆಗೆಳ್ಳು, <i>tagoḷḷu,</i> ತಕ್ಕೊಳ್ಳು <i>takkoḷḷu</i>

Especially these forms of *kare* and *tege* are colloquially in very frequent use (the full forms *karedukoṃḍu* and *tegedukoṃḍu* being more literary), when used together with *baru* 'to come' or *hōgu* 'to go'. The combination *karedukoṃḍu baru* / *karakoṃḍu baru* (lit. 'having-called-for-oneself to come') means 'to bring' when referring to persons, whereas the combination *tegedukoṃḍu baru* / *tagoṃḍu baru* also means 'to bring', but only when referring to non-human objects:

ನಾನು ಅವರನ್ನು ಕರಕೊಂಡು ಬರುತ್ತೇನೆ	<i>nānu avarannu karakoṃḍu baruttēne</i>	I'll bring them (along with me)
ನಾನು ಆ ಪುಸ್ತಕಗಳನ್ನು ತೆಗೆಂಡು ಬರುತ್ತೇನೆ	<i>nānu ā pustakagaḷannu tagoṃḍu baruttēne</i>	I'll bring those books

Similarly, the combinations with *hōgu* mean 'to take (away)':

ನಾನು ಅವರನ್ನು ಕರಕೊಂಡಲು ಮನೆಗೆ ಹೋಗುತ್ತೇನೆ	<i>nānu avarannu karakomḍu manege hōguttēne</i>	I'll take them (persons) to my home
ನಾನು ಆ ಪುಸ್ತಕಗಳನ್ನು ತಗೊಂಡು ಮನೆಗೆ ಹೋಗುತ್ತೇನೆ	<i>nānu ā pustakagaḷannu tagomḍu manege hōguttēne</i>	I'll take those books home

Notes

¹ Again, this can be compared to English, where a verb such as 'to learn' has two alternative past forms: *learnt* and *learned*.

² The following division in classes of strong verbs has been adopted from Spencer 1950.

³ In the neighbouring language Tamil, one finds these verbs have two alternative root forms: *ā* and *pō*, besides *āku* and *pōku*. Presumably a similar situation existed in the earliest stages of Kannada.

⁴ This verb is considered indelicate or vulgar, rather like the English 'to shit', and the learner should not normally use it; but it is useful in teaching, to illustrate the importance of the distinction between the dental and retroflex lateral consonants, cf. the contrast with the everyday verb *hēlu* 'to say'.

⁵ This verb is used somewhat ceremoniously. The verb ordinarily used for 'to give' is *koḍu*.

⁶ Used for non-humans and for humans whom the speaker does not particularly respect. There are a few different, more delicate expressions that are the equivalent of the English 'to pass away', 'to be no more' etc.

⁷ The root also occurs as *sikku*, with gerund *sikki*, as a regular *u*-class verb.