

## From Unicode discussion

< Malayalam

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## 1 Multiple ways to represent vowellessness

Malayalam script is an abugida with vowel അ(/a/)inherent in all consonants. The generic way to represent vowellessness of a consonant, is to use Visible virama(/candrakkala/) following the consonant. Example: ക്ക (/k/). However, following consonants have another standalone form called Chillu, to represent vowellessness together with a stop or nasal occlusion. Apart from the following consonants no other consonant has Chillu form.

Consonant	ക	ണ	ന	മ	യ	ല	ള	ഴ	ര	റ
Chillu Form	ക്ക	ണ്	ന്	മ് o (/anuswara/)	യ്	ല്	ള്	ഴ്	ര്	റ്

Along with the above mentioned properties, visible virama and Chillus have following interesting and relevant properties.

### 1.1 Visible Virama

Depending on the word context, a visible Virama assumes following functions:

#### 1.1.1 To represent the vowel i (IPA)

Visible Virama is used to represent closed central unrounded vowel(i) which is called /samvruthokaaram/. Examples:

Example Word	Type	Pronunciation	Meaning
അവന്ക	With Visible Virama	/avan <sup>i</sup> /	for him
അവന്	With Chillu form	/avan/	he

#### 1.1.2 To represent vowel removal

In many <C1, Visible Virama, C2> contexts, visible virama would represent that consonant C1 is forming a conjunct with consonant C2. Similarly, in many <C1, Visible Virama> contexts, it acts as an inherent അ(/a/) vowel remover. Here it represents phonetic function of vowel remover and graphical function of joiner.

Example: ശബ്ദം = ശബ്ദം. Both meaning *sound* and pronounced /shabdam/.

#### 1.1.3 To represent vowel removal and non-joining

In many <C1, Visible Virama, C2> contexts, visible virama would represent the component word boundary in a composite word. This is the graphical function of boundary separator(non-joiner) and the phonetic function of removing default vowel from previous consonant.

Example Word	Type	Pronunciation	Meaning
ദേശ്ശാഗം	With Visible Virama	/de:sh'ra:gam/	raaga desh
ദേശ്ശാഗം	With sign of റ(/ra/)	/de:shrra:gam/	meaningless(illegible)

## 1.2 Chillu

Chillu represents vowellessness together with a stop or nasal occlusion. The meaning of some words that use chillu change when the stop is removed by using consonant sign instead of the Chillu.

		Pronunciation	Meaning
With Chillu	വൻയവനിക	/van'yavanika/	big curtain
Without Chillu	വന്യവനിക	/vanyavanika/	wild forest

However in some other words, meaning does not change between chillu and non-chillu forms. This is comparable to 'color' and 'colour'.

		Pronunciation	Meaning
With Chillu	നൻമ	/nanma/	goodness
Without Chillu	നന്മ	/nanma/	goodness

Chillu റ has some special properties described in following sections:

### 1.2.1 Native user behavior on Chillu റ

Native users always pronounce റ as RRA\_dead; not as RA\_dead. Also, they understand Malayalam as a phonetic script. Hence they assume the base letter of റ as RRA. Because of that, whenever they need to put RRA\_dead in writing, they the Chillu റ.

### 1.2.2 Multiple base lettersfor Chillu റ

Chillu റ represents the base character RA(ര) in many Malayalam words as seen in the following examples:

Combining Words (/...rr + a.../)	അവർ + അല്ല	മലർ + അല്ല
Resulting combination (/...ra.../)		

	അവരല്ല	മലരല്ല	
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Similarly, Chillu ൾ represents RRA(റ) in some others words:

Combining Words (/...rr + a.../)	ഞായർ + അല്ല	ചാവേർ + അല്ല	പയർ + അല്ല
Resulting combination (/...rra.../)	ഞായറല്ല	ചാവേറല്ല	പയറല്ല

While above words are of Dravidian origin, lots of words with Chillu ൾ are of Arabic or Urdu origin:

Combining Words (/...rr + a.../)	കരാർ + അല്ല	വദർ + അല്ല
Resulting combination (/...rra.../)	കരാറല്ല	വദറല്ല

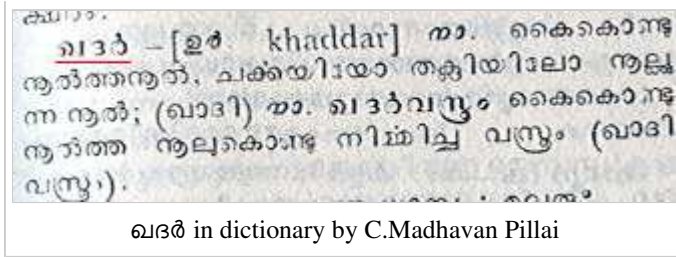
Below are the corresponding scans from a dictionary:

ചാവേർ. ചാവുവര-[ച+ഉറ] മരണയഃകൂടാതെ യുദ്ധത്തിനു ചെല്ലുന്ന; മരിക്കാൻ സന്നദ്ധനായി നില്ക്കുന്ന; (ത. ചാവുവരവൻ-ത. ചാവേർ(ർ) മരണയഃകൂടാതെ മരിക്കാൻ തയ്യാറായിത്തന്നെ യുദ്ധത്തിനുചെല്ലൽ; യജമാനന്മാരെ പ്രാണനെക്കാൾ കൂടുതലായി സ്നേഹിച്ചിരുന്ന ഒരു മലനാടൻവർഗ്ഗം; സ്വന്തം ജീവൻ നഷ്ടപ്പെട്ടാലും ശത്രുക്കളെ ആക്രമിച്ചു നശിപ്പിക്കണമെന്നു ദൃഢപ്രതഃമുദ്രത്തിട്ടുള്ള യോദ്ധാവ്; ചാവേർപ്പട്ട-ചാവേർപ്പട്ടയാളികൾ മാത്രമുള്ള പ്രത്യേക സൈന്യം; ക്രി. ചാവേറുക-മരണയഃ കൂടാതെ യുദ്ധത്തിനു ചെല്ലുക; (ത. ചാവേർ, ചാവേറം); ചാവേറുമീൻ-ചെന്നീറ്റിൽ

ചാവേർ in dictionary by C.Madhavan Pillai

ഞായർ(റ)- ത. ഓരോ ആഴ്ചയിലേയും ആദ്യദിവസം, സൂര്യവാരം, ഞായറാഴ്ച; സൂര്യൻ; സൗരമാസം; ത. ഞായറാഴ്ച-Sunday; (ത. ഞായർറക്കിളമൈ); ഞായറാഴ്ചപ്രതഃ-ആദിത്യപ്രീതിക്കായി ഞായറാഴ്ച അനുഷ്ഠിക്കുന്ന ഒരു പ്രതഃ; ഞായർ-ഞായർ; [ത. ഞായറു; ക. നേസര].

ഞായർ in dictionary by C.Madhavan Pillai



This indicates that both RA(ൗ) and RRA(ൠ) have the same chillu, that is, ൪. Number of words that has chillu ൪ from RA (ൗ) is more than those from RRA(ൠ). However, the number of words with chillu ൪ from ൠ is significant.

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