

Jenu Kurumba Phonology - Practical Orthography

Since the Jenu Kurumbas live in the border districts of three states – Tamilnadu (where Tamil is spoken), Kerala (where Malayalam is spoken) and Karnataka (where Kannada is spoken), it is necessary to assign three scripts - Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada for Jenu Kurumba.

The Jenu Kurumbas who live in Tamilnadu will use the Tamil script in order to learn to read and write their own language as well as to bridge to Tamil language materials at a later time. On the other hand, those who are already literate in Tamil would transfer their existing knowledge in Tamil to reading and writing Jenu Kurumba. The same principle can be applied to Jenu Kurumbas living in Kerala and Karnataka who will be assigned the use of Malayalam and Kannada scripts, respectively.

However, compared to Tamil, there are more phonemes in Jenu Kurumba, so modification of Tamil script is needed. The voiced plosives of Jenu Kurumba will be a main issue since they are not written as phonemes in Tamil. This issue will not affect the other two scripts (Malayalam & Karnataka), because they have more phonemes than Jenu Kurumba. Moreover, the additional vowel symbols needed for writing the vowels ə:, i and i: seem to be an issue in all the three scripts.

A list of the phonemes with their corresponding orthographic symbols in Tamil is given below followed by Malayalam and Kannada:

1.1 Tamil

1.1.1 Consonants

A	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Post alv	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	p ப		t த			ʈ ட		k க	
	b ப*		ɖ த*			ɖ ட*		g க*	
Nasal	m ம			n ன		ɳ ண		ŋ ங	
Affricates							tʃ ச		
							dʒ ஜ		
Flap				r ர					
Fricative				s ஸ					h ஹ
				z ஸ*					
Approximant		v வ					j ய		
Lateral approx				l ல		ʎ ள			

* Modification needed (voiced plosives are not phonemes in Tamil).

Note: ஜ /dʒ/, ஸ /s/, ஹ /h/ are sanskrit letters used in Tamil since these sounds are not phonemes in Tamil. But these are used in Tamil Bible and all the Tamil speakers know these letters. However, there is no letter for /z/.

1.1.2 Vowels

	Front	Centra	Back
High	i இ	i *	u உ
	i: ஈ	i: *	u: ஊ
Mid	e எ		o ஒ
	e: ஏ		o: ஔ
Low		ɔ அ	
		ɔ: *	
		ɐ ஆ	

* Modification needed

JENU KURUMBA VOWELS		
IPA	Letter	Vowel with [p]
ɔ	அ	ப
ɔ:	*	*
ɐ	ஆ	பா
i	இ	பி
i:	ஈ	பீ
ɨ	*	*
ɨ:	*	*
u	உ	பு
u:	ஊ	பூ
e	எ	பெ
e:	ஏ	பே
o	ஒ	பொ
o:	ஔ	போ

* Modification needed

1.2 Malayalam

1.2.1 Consonants

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Post alv	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	p പ		t ത			ʈ ഴ		k ക	
	b ബ		d ള			ɖ ഡ		g ഗ	
Nasal	m മ			n ന		ɳ ണ		ŋ ണ	
Affricates							tʃ ച		
							dʒ ജ		
Flap				r ര					
Fricative				s സ					
				z സ*					h ഹ
Approximant		v വ					j യ		
Lateral approx				l ല		ɭ ല			

* Modification needed.

1.2.2 Vowels

	Front	Central	Back
High	i ഇ	ɨ *	u ഉ
	i: ഈ	ɨ: *	u: ഈ
Mid	e എ		o ഒ
	e: ഏ		o: ഓ
Low		ɜ അ	
		ɜ: *	
		ɝ ആ	

* Modification needed

JENU KURUMBA VOWELS		
IPA	Letter	Vowel with [p]
ɜ	അ	പ
ɜ:	*	*
ɝ	ആ	പാ
i	ഇ	പി
i:	ഈ	പീ
ɨ	*	*
ɨ:	*	*
u	ഉ	പു
u:	ഊ	പൂ
e	എ	പെ
e:	ഐ	പേ
o	ഒ	പൊ
o:	ഔ	പോ

* Modification needed

1.3 Kannada

1.3.1 Consonants

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Post alve	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	p ಪ		t ತ			ʈ ಟ		k ಕ	
	b ಬ		d ಧ			ɖ ಡ		g ಗ	
Nasal	m ಮ			n ನ		ɳ ಣ		ŋ ಜ	
Affricates							tʃ ಚ		
							dʒ ಜ		
Flap				r ರ					
Fricative				s ಸ					
				z ಸ*					h ಹ
Approximant		ʋ ವ					j ಯ		
Lateral approxi				l ಲ		ʎ ಳ			

* Modification needed.

1.3.2 Vowels

	Front	Central	Back
High	i ಇ	ɨ *	u ಉ
	i: ಈ	ɨ: *	u: ಊ
Mid	e ಎ		o ಒ
	e: ಏ		o: ಓ
Low		ɜ ಳ	
		ɜ: *	
		ɝ ಳ	

* Modification needed

JENU KURUMBA VOWELS		
IPA	Letter	Vowel with [p]
ɜ	ೳ	ಪ
ɜ:	*	*
ɝ	ೳ	ಪಾ
i	ಇ	ಪಿ
i:	ಈ	ಪೀ
ɨ	*	*
ɨ:	*	*
u	ಉ	ಪು
u:	ಊ	ಪೂ
e	ಎ	ಪೆ
e:	ಏ	ಪೇ
o	ಒ	ಪೊ
o:	ಓ	ಪೋ

* Modification needed