

Sandhi



*Hoysala-style sculpture of
Gaṇeśa, lord of obstacles,
Haḷēbīḍu (Halebid)*

Introductory theoretical remarks

The written word is a graphic representation of the spoken word; this graphic representation does not reflect all the possible, sometimes very subtle, differences in pronunciation that occur in actual speech. A person can be recognized by peculiarities of purely personal pronunciation that cannot be written (this is how one can recognize a person's voice on the telephone, for instance). In the speech of every person, the occurrence of sequences of certain speech sounds can lead to changes in those sounds or in those sequences of sounds, which makes the pronunciation of the sentences in which they occur easier.

Some of these changes are so commonly accepted within the speech community that they are reflected in writing. This happens, for instance, when the English sequence *I am* becomes *I'm*. The apostrophe is a conventional sign in English spelling to indicate that one of several possible **euphonic combinations** (in this particular case: elision) has occurred. This can occur in practically all languages that are written in a script that reflects pronunciation, whether that script is an alphabet, as is the case with English, or an abugida, as with Kannada and almost all the other languages of India.

In Sanskrit, the foremost classical language of India, this phenomenon is so prominent that the Sanskrit word for it, *sandhi*, has been adopted also by Western linguists to denote the phenomenon of euphonic combination in any language. In several languages, euphonic combination has been codified in the form of grammatical rules. For instance, in French, nobody writes 'the school' as **la école*. When the word *école* is preceded by the definite article *la*, the final vowel of the article is elided (and replaced in writing by an apostrophe, the spelling convention which English also adopted): *l'école*. This simple kind of sandhi is called, in Kannada grammatical terminology, *lōpasam̐dhi* or 'sandhi [characterized by] loss'. In some languages there is no such indication as an apostrophe, as in the case of Portuguese, where, for instance, the word sequences *de* and *o*, or *de* and *a* ('of the', masculine and feminine singular respectively) melt together to *do* and *da*. Similarly, there are no special elision markers in Indian scripts.¹

In Kannada there are two sets of sandhi rules: (a) indigenous Kannada rules, (b) rules that apply to loanwords from Sanskrit. The rules of Sanskrit sandhi, which apply only to compound words that are borrowed from Sanskrit and to neologisms that are based on Sanskrit elements, are complicated and many, and they are best learnt from a book on Sanskrit grammar. In Kannada they are relevant only for understanding why certain changes occur within Sanskrit compound words (e.g., why *manas* and *vṛtti* together form *manōvṛtti*, *aṃtaḥ* and *rāṣṭrīya* become *aṃtārāṣṭrīya* 'international'², *gṛantha* and *ālaya* become *gṛanthālaya* 'library', etc.), but the beginning learner need not know all the underlying rules of Sanskrit sandhi, just as a learner of English need not understand the corresponding Latin rules of euphonic combination that modify the common prefix in the English words *conduct*, *comfort* and *corrupt*.

In modern Kannada, the rules of sandhi are not consistently applied but are rather considered to be something optional.³ This makes the occurrence of sandhi quite unpredictable and largely a matter of regional and personal preference. All the forms of sandhi that are described below occur frequently in writing (and still more so in speech), therefore the learner must be aware of the phenomenon and know the rules, so that he can recognize the forms of the words that may become partly hidden because of sandhi.⁴

Kannada sandhi

There are three kinds of Kannada sandhi: *lōpasam̐dhi*, *āgamasam̐dhi* and *ādēśasam̐dhi*.

Lōpasam̐dhi

‘Sandhi by loss’, or elision, occurs when the short final vowel of a word is elided due to the following word beginning with a vowel. This happens particularly often when that short final vowel is *u*, but it also commonly occurs with *e* or *i*, and it may also occur with a final *a* when this is not considered an essential part of the word (for instance, when it is the vowel of the genitive suffix – see below).

This type of sandhi is extremely common, and especially in the combinations *āgi* + a form of the verb ‘to be’ (either a form of *iru*, or the negative *illa* as well as *alla*) and *alli* / *illi* (*alli* also as the ending of the locative case) + a form of ‘to be’, one sees practically nothing else in writing.

<i>avaru</i> + <i>ū</i>	<i>avarū</i>	they too
<i>avaru</i> + <i>ā</i>	<i>avarā</i>	they?
<i>hōguvudu</i> + <i>illa</i>	<i>hōguvudilla</i>	will not go
<i>cennāgi</i> + <i>illa</i>	<i>cennāgilla</i>	is not nice
<i>nānu</i> + <i>alla</i>	<i>nānalla</i>	not me
<i>nīvu</i> + <i>allade</i>	<i>nīvallade</i>	besides you
<i>māḍalu</i> + <i>illa</i>	<i>māḍalilla</i>	did not do
<i>hāge</i> + <i>illa</i>	<i>hāgilla</i>	not so
<i>illi</i> + <i>ide</i>	<i>illide</i>	it is here

Lōpasam̐dhi is also seen where the final *a* of the genitive is elided before a following vowel:

<i>haṇada āse</i>	<i>haṇadāse</i>	hankering after money
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<i>adhikārada āse</i>	<i>adhikāradāse</i>	hankering after authority
<i>pustakada aṃgaḍi</i>	<i>pustakadaṃgaḍi</i>	bookshop ('shop of book')

The same occurs in the formation of the locative case (which is actually a genitive + *alli*) and with the postposition *oḷage*:

<i>maneya + alli</i>	<i>maneyalli</i>	in the house
<i>maneya + oḷage</i>	<i>maneyoḷage</i>	inside the house

It should be noted that in the modern language, particularly in prose, this type of sandhi is considered optional, not compulsory when the two successive words are felt to be two distinct, independent words in their own right: for instance, *haṇada āse* and *haṇadāse* are both permissible, but the former is nowadays seen more often. (However, see the above note about the forms of *iru*, *āgu*, *illa* and *alla* at the end of sentences.)

The final *e* of the dative also disappears before a following vowel:

<i>manege + ā</i>	<i>manegā</i>	home? / to the house?
<i>yāriḡe + ō</i>	<i>yāriḡō</i>	to someone
<i>nanage + ū</i>	<i>nanagū</i>	also to me

It is not possible for any dictionary or grammar to include all the possible combinations that may occur through such applications of sandhi. However, the agglutinative structure of the Dravidian languages makes it easy to detect such occurrences. If, for instance, one does not recognize the expression *pustakadaṃgaḍi*, one simply takes a dictionary and looks for words that begin with the same sequence of letters. When one has found *pustaka* 'book' and realizes that this, of course, is a neuter noun that is declined after the pattern of *mara* etc., then one realizes that the genitive of *pustaka* is *pustakada*, and the *d* in the middle of the compound word is explained. Then one looks for the next member of the compound, *aṃgaḍi*, and one understands what the compound word means.

Lopasaṃdhi is **extremely common** before forms of the verbs *iru* and *āgu* towards the end of sentences and clauses: *alli tuṃba janarid-dāre* (*alli tuṃba janaru iddāre*), *bīdiyalli hasugaḷive* (*bīdiyalli hasugaḷu*

ive), *hasividdare cennāgilla* (*hasivu iddare cennāgi illa*), etc., and **always** occurs when the extremely frequently used gerund *āgi* is followed by a form of *iru*: *cennāgide* (*cennāgi ide*), *cennāgiddēne* (*cennāgi iddēne*), *suṃdaravāgide* (*suṃdaravāgi ide*), etc.

Āgamasam̐dhi

‘Sandhi by coming’ (i.e., by arrival of an additional consonant) occurs when a connecting consonant is inserted between two vowels. Usually, if the preceding vowel is *i*, *e* or *ai*, the connecting consonant will be *y*; otherwise, it will be *v*.

<i>mara + alla</i>	<i>maravalla</i>	is not a tree
<i>gōdi + illa</i>	<i>gōdiyilla</i>	there is no wheat
<i>illi + ū</i>	<i>illiyū</i>	also here
<i>huḍugi + ū</i>	<i>huḍugiyū</i>	also a girl
<i>vidyārthi + ā</i>	<i>vidyārthiyā?</i>	a student?
<i>pustaka + ā</i>	<i>pustakavā?</i>	a book?

In some cases, a different historical consonant, which has been lost in a later stage of development of the language, may reappear (compare, for instance, the French *aime-t-il?*, where an original Latin *t*, which disappeared from the third person singular in French, has somehow been preserved subconsciously in the collective memory of the speech community and returns before a following vowel). This occurs in Kannada when, for instance, an *l* appears when one of the suffixes *ā*, *ū* or *ē* is added to a word in the ablative case, or to the time-indicating adverbs *īga / āga / yāvāga*. Similarly, an *n* is always added after a masculine word ending in *a* before the case endings, because originally, in Old Kannada, such words did not end in *a*, but in *an*.

<i>manuṣya + ige</i>	<i>manuṣyanige</i>	to a man
<i>huḍuga + a</i>	<i>huḍugana</i>	of a boy
<i>adu huḍuga + alla</i>	<i>adu huḍuganalla</i>	that is not a boy

<i>alliṃda + ē</i>	<i>alliṃdalē</i>	from there (emphasized)
<i>elliṃda + ādarū</i>	<i>elliṃdalādarū</i>	from anywhere
<i>elliṃda + ō</i>	<i>elliṃdalō</i>	from somewhere
<i>īga + ū</i>	<i>īgalū</i>	also now
<i>yāvāga + ū</i>	<i>yāvagalū</i>	always
<i>yāvāga + ādarū</i>	<i>yāvagalādarū</i>	any time
<i>yāvāga + ō</i>	<i>yāvagalō</i>	some time
<i>īga + ā</i>	<i>īgalā</i>	now?

Sometimes we see that more than one type of sandhi is acceptable: for instance, when a locative ending in *alli* is followed by one of the enclitics *ā*, *ē*, *ō*, *ū*:

<i>maneyalliyū</i>	also in the house (<i>āgamasam̐dhi</i>)
<i>maneyallū</i>	also in the house (<i>lōpasam̐dhi</i>)

Āgamasam̐dhi is **extremely common** before forms of the verbs *iru* and *āgu* towards the end of sentences and clauses: *avara hattira haṇavide* (*avara hattira haṇa ide*), *adu kaṣṭavāguttade* (*adu kaṣṭa āguttade*), *kaṣṭavā-dare bēḍa* (*kaṣṭa ādare bēḍa*), etc.

A special kind of *āgamasam̐dhi* is found after the case ending for the ablative case and after the adverbs of time *īga*, *āga* and *yāvāga*: when any of the suffixes *ā*, *ē*, *ō*, *ū* is added, the consonant *l* is inserted between the inflected word and the suffix, resulting in combinations such as *adarim̐dalē*, *īgalū*, *yāvagalō* etc. This is the return of a historical final consonant that was lost in the period after the twelfth century, when the language no longer tolerated words that ended in a consonant.⁵

Ādēśasam̐dhi

‘Sandhi by substitution’ occurs when the second of two words that combine begins with an unvoiced plosive consonant (*k*, *p*, *t*). This consonant is changed to the voiced consonant of the same *varga* (*g*, *b*, *d*). Most of the words in which this type of sandhi occurs are old compounds.

<i>maḷe + kāla</i>	<i>maḷegāla</i>	monsoon, rainy season
<i>suḍu + kāḍu</i>	<i>suḍugāḍu</i>	cremation ground ('burning area')
<i>heṇṇu + kūsu</i>	<i>heṅgūsu</i>	baby girl ('female baby')
<i>beṭṭa + tāvare</i>	<i>beṭṭadāvare</i>	mountain lotus
<i>nil[lu] + tāṇa</i>	<i>nildāṇa</i>	station ('standing place')
<i>kaṇṇu + pani</i>	<i>kaṃbani</i>	tears ('eye water')

Notes

¹ The one exception is the so-called *avagraha* that is used in writing Sanskrit and indicates an elided initial short *a*, but its use, however common nowadays, is not compulsory.

² This is one of the most frequently misspelled words, not only in Kannada, but in all languages across India. Often one finds wrong spellings such as *aṃtarrāṣṭriya* and *aṃtararāṣṭriya*.

³ Cf. Kittel 1903: 170 (§213): "It occurs in the ancient, medieval and modern dialect, especially in poetry. The colloquial dialect and modern prose writings often disregard it."

⁴ Similarly, when learning English, a learner must learn that *it's* means the same as *it is*, *won't* the same as *will not*, etc. etc.

⁵ This is comparable with the return of a historical *t* in French in the case of inversion of subject and verb: *il a*, but *a-t-il*?

