

7. Nouns: Gender

In Telugu there are only two genders: masculine and non-masculine. All male names and pronouns are masculine. All male personifications are also masculine.

☞	sU-ryu-Du Sun	☞	caM-dru-Du Moon
	bu-dhu-Du Mercury	Sa-ni	Saturn

All female names and pronouns are non-masculine. All female personifications are non-masculine. Among the planets, planet Earth alone is feminine. All animals and inanimate objects are also non-masculine.

Unlike Hindi and Sanskrit, gender identification (for the purpose of verb inflection) in Telugu is relatively easy: Masculine verb inflection goes with masculine gender and feminine verb inflection goes with non-masculine gender. There are some exceptions, particularly while personifying inanimate objects – a process that happens all the time in Indian languages because many inanimate objects are personified with the names of gods and goddesses.

1. Masculine Nouns

In Telugu the suffix - (–Du) is almost always indicative of masculine gender. For example:

☞	ta-mmu-Du	younger brother	☞	mu-khyu-Du	important man
A»	a-llu-Du	son-in-law	☞	nA-ya-ku-Du	leader (male)
	ma-nu-ma-Du	grandson		na-Tu-Du	actor (male)

However, there are lot more masculine nouns that do not end in (–Du). For example:

A°	a-nna	elder brother	mA-ma	uncle	
☞	taM-Dri	father	☞	ko-Du-ku	son

Among the non-masculine, one can identify a non-human gender, which is treated exactly like the feminine gender. In non-human gender the number is indicated by an inflection of the verb. For example:

☞	A-vu va-cciM-di	cow has come/cow came	
☞	A-vu-lu va-ccE-yi	cows have come /cows came	
E®	☞	e-ddu va-cciM-di	ox has come/ox came
E®	☞	e-ddu-lu va-ccE-yi,	oxen have come/oxen came

Note that the same feminine inflection is used with both cow (a feminine gender, singular) and the bull (a masculine gender, singular).

2. Feminine Nouns

2.1 While dealing with class names, most of the time, there are distinct words to denote male and female sexes of people.

<i>Maculine</i>		<i>Feminine</i>	
°	nA-nna father	A ɸ	a-mma mother
	mA-ma son	Ÿ	kU-tu-ru daughter
ɸ	ko-Du-ku river		na-du-lu rivers
A ʒ	a-bbA-yi boy	A ɸ	a-mmA-yi girl
»	pi-lla-Du lad	»	pi-lla lass
	rA-ju king		rA-Ni queen

2.2 Some male class names ending in (Du) can be converted to female class names by deleting the – U suffix and adding a -l (i).

<i>Maculine</i>		<i>Feminine</i>	
	na-Tu-Du actor		na-Ti actress
ɸ	na-rta-ku-Du dancer	-ü	na-rta-ki dancer
A ɸ	a-rbha-ku-Du weakling	A ü	a-rbha-ki weakling
ɸ	nA-ya-ku-Du leader/hero	ü	nA-ya-ki leader/heroine
ɸ	vA-ca-ku-Du narrator	ü	vA-ca-ki narrator
ɸ	vaMcakuDu cheater	- -ü	vaM-ca-ki cheater

2.3 Some male class names ending in (Du) can be converted to female class names by deleting the (Du) and adding the suffix, (rAlu).

<i>Maculine</i>		<i>Feminine</i>	
ɸ	na-rta-ku-Du dancer	ɸ	na-rta-ku-rA-lu dancer
ɸ	vaMcakuDu cheater	ɸ	vaM-ca-ku-rA-lu cheater
ì	pri-yu-Du lover	ì	pri-yu-rA-lu lover
	paM-Di-tu-Du male scholar		paM-Di-tu-rA-lu female scholar
ɸ	bha-ktu-Du male devotee	ɸ	bha-ktu-rA-lu female devotee
°	snE-hi-tu-Du male friend	°	snE-hi-tu-rA-lu female friend
ì ɸ	prA-pa-ku-Du patron	ì ɸ	prA-pa-ku-rA-lu patron

¶	Si-shyu-Du	disciple	¶	Si-shyu-rA-lu	disciple
	ya-ja-mA-ni	owner/master		ya-ja-mA-nu-rA-lu	owner/master

Note 1. The word (ya-ja-mA-ni) can be safely used to stand for both male and female owner/boss and is therefore recommended by this author.

2.4 Indeed the above suffix (-rA-lu) is obtained by appending - (A-lu) and performing a *sandhi*. In some inherently feminine words, the suffix - (-A-lu) appears as is. In these cases, there is no corresponding masculine gender. For example:

, cU-lA-lu, pregnant woman

l » , i-lA-lu, housewife

2.5 Almost all male class names that are created by appending (vA-Du) to an adjectival stem can almost always be converted to female class names by deleting the (-vA-Du) and adding the suffix, - (-di).

Maculine

Feminine

¶	ku-rrA-Du	youngster	¶	na-rta-ku-rA-lu	youngster
ü	pi-ri-ki-vA-Du	timid person	ü	pi-ri-ki-di	timid person
®	pe-dda-vA-Du	senior person	®	pe-dda-di	senior person

2.6 Almost all male class names that are created by appending a - (-vA-Du) to the name of a profession can be converted to female class names by deleting the - (-vA-Du) and adding the suffix, (di).

Maculine

Feminine

dA-sI-vA-Du	man servant	dA-sI-di	woman servant
cA-ka-li-vA-Du	washerman	cA-ka-li-di	washerwoman

2.7 Some male class names ending in can be converted to female class names by deleting the suffix — U (u-Du) and adding the suffix, -l (i-ka)

Maculine

Feminine

bA-lu-Du	boy	bA-li-ka	girl	
¶	pa-ri-cA-ra-ku-Du	attendant	paricArika	female attendant

2.8 Few male class names ending in (Du) can be converted to female class names by deleting the suffix U (uDu) and adding the suffix, l (iNi).

<i>Maculine</i>		<i>Feminine</i>	
l u	ci-tra-kA-ru-Du painter	l u	ci-tra-kA-ri-Ni painter

2.9 Some male class names ending in u (kA-Du) can be converted to female class names by deleting the suffix u (kA-Du) and adding the suffix, ʌ (ka-tte).

<i>Maculine</i>		<i>Feminine</i>	
u	mOsakADu	ʌ	mO-sa-ka-tte cheater
u	vi-lu-kA-Du		pa-ri-cA-ri-ka female archer
ʌ	hA-sya-gA-Du	ʌ ʌ	hA-sya-ka-tte clown
A	aM-da-gA-Du	A ʌ	aM-da-ga-tte handsome/beautiful person
u	ce-li-kA-Du	ʌ	ce-li-ka-tte boy/girl friend

2.10 The following examples do not seem to fall into any particular category.

<i>Maculine</i>		<i>Feminine</i>	
	vaM-Ta-vA-Du	š	vaM-Ta-la-kka cook/chef
p	gA-ya-ku-Du		gA-ya-ni singer
	paM-tu-lu	ʌ	paM-tu-la-mma teacher
š	mE-shTA-ru	š ʌ	mE-shTa-ra-mma teacher
ʌ	vi-dyA-rdhi	ʌ	vi-dyA-rdhi-ni student
	gu-ru-vu	½	gurviNi teacher
l ʌ	brA-hma-Nu-Du	l ʌ	brA-hma-Ni teacher

2.11 Some times the female class name is derived from the corresponding male class name, by changing the ending. There is no consistent pattern in this ending. Some examples are:

<i>Maculine</i>		<i>Feminine</i>	
	ra-ca-yi-ta	l	ra-ca-yi-tri writer/author
	ka-vi	l	ka-va-yi-tri writer/author

Note 2. For these two words, the modern trend, however, is to use the names in the left column for both males and females. Indeed, if the class name does not end in - (Du), it is safe to try the same name to

refer to both males and females and make the intent explicit by making the verb ending in concordance with the gender. The only exception to this is A **३** (a-bhi-nE-tri), a Hindi word for an actress. To this author's knowledge, the corresponding Hindi word A **३** (a-bhi-nE-ta) for an actor has never been used in Telugu.

2.12 But for a few exceptions, in Telugu, there are no distinct names for male and female animals. Some of the more prominent exceptions are:

<i>Maculine</i>		<i>Feminine</i>	
E [Ⓢ]	e-ddu bull/ox		Avu cow
	dU-Da male calf	३	pe-yya female calf
	puM-ju cock	३	pe-TTa hen

Even in these cases, the verb concordances are derived by treating all animals as females (remember, Telugu has only two genders: masculine and non-masculine).

A	a-di A-vu	That is a cow/She is a cow
A E [Ⓢ]	a-di e-ddu	That is a bull/She is a bull
E [Ⓢ]	◦ e-ddu baM-Di-ni lA-gu-tu-nna-di	The ox is pulling the cart

One never says E[Ⓢ] ◦ (e-ddu baM-Di lA-gu-tu-nnA-Du) even though E[Ⓢ] (e-ddu) is a male.

3. Vocabulary

Read the following words aloud.

A ३	a-bbA-yi boy	A ३	a-bbA-yi-lu palm boys
A ३	a-mmA-yi girl	A ३	a-mmA-yi-lu girls
३	pi-Tta bird	३	pi-TTa-lu birds
	ceM-cA spoon		ceM-cA-lu spoons
	pA-Ta song		pA-Ta-lu songs
¼	pa-LLeM plate	¼	pa-LLe-lu plates
u	kA-gi-taM paper	u	kA-gi-tA-lu papers
	ka-laM pen		ka-lA-lu pens
᳚	pu-sta-kAM book	᳚	pu-sta-kA-lu books
l»	i-llu house	l ¼	i-LLu houses
	baM-Di vehicle	1	ba-LLu vehicles

u kAlu leg u ¼ kA-LLu legs

Exercises 1. read the following aloud

A 3 a-bbA-yi boy A u a-mmA-yi girl
 A ¶ a-yya father A u a-mma mother
 mI-da over/on ü kiMda under/down
 U uM-di yes, it exists IE-du no, it does not exist
 ¶ bi-yyaM rice A ° a-nnaM cooked rice
 ? E-di? which one? E š ? e-kka-Da? where?
 p ku-Di right E e-Da-ma left
 pA-lu milk a ma-jji-ga buttermilk

Exercises

1. Read the following paragraph aloud.

A ¶ E ? ? ? E u ? ¼ . ¶ . U
 . ¶ .

2. Read the following paragraph, written in RTS, aloud.

shAjahAn^ okAnokappuDu bhArata dESAniki cakravarti. shAjahAn^ bhArya pEru muMtAj^ bEgaM.
 Ame eMtO aMdamaina manishi. padunAlgava pillani kaMTU, ammOy^ bAbOy^ aMTU, puriTilO
 cacci pOyiMdi. "ayyayyO!" ani shAjahAn^ bAdha paDDaDu. aMta aMdmaina manishiki iMkA
 aMdamaina gOrI kaTTiMcAlani shAjahAn^ anukunnADu. AgrA IO, yamunA nadi oDDuna, tellaTi
 pAla rAtitO oka gOrI kaTTiMcEdu. adE tAj^ mahal^. iMtaTi aMdamaina bhavanaM prapaMcaM IO
 marekkaDa lEdu.

shAjahAn^ tanaki kUDA nallaTi pAla rAtitO ok gOrI kaTTiMcukuMdAmani anukunnADu. kAnI
 shAjahAn^ koDuku jahaMgIru shAjahAnuni KhaidulO peTTi baMDhicEDu. lEkapOtE, mana dESam
 IO reMDu tAj^ mahaLLu UmDEvEmO!

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