

Telling time; Good and Bad time of a day

The question words என்ன 'what' and எத்தனை 'how many?' and எவ்வளவு 'how much' are used to query time in different contexts.

இப்போ மணி என்ன (spoken)? 'What time is it now?'

எத்தனை மணிக்கு நான் வரணும் (spoken)? 'At what time do I need to com?' or 'At what time should I be here?'

எவ்வளவு நேரம் நீங்க குளிப்பீங்க (spoken)? 'How long would you take for your shower?'

The word மணி is used in the sense of o'clock (cf. time) and நேரம் in the sense of 'duration of time'. Duration can be from the range of 'seconds' to 'years'. Another word used to refer to time generally, or as seasons, is காலம்.

Hours of the day

Any specific time in Tamil is expressed from the hour in terms of a quarter (கால்), half (அரை) and three –quarters (முக்கால்). Unlike in English, no time is expressed to the hour. Below are some of the example times.

ஒன்றேகால் (ஒன்னேகால்) 'one and a quarter' (1:15)

ஒன்றரை (ஒன்னரை) 'one and a half' (1:30)

ஒன்றேமுக்கால் (ஒன்னேமுக்கால்) 'one and three – quarters' (1:45)

The other sub-divisions of time are marked with the word நிமிடம் or நிமிஷம் 'minute' and நொடி 'second'.

எட்டு மணி பத்து நிமிஷம் 'eight o'clock and ten minute' (8:10)

ஆறு மணி பத்து நிமிஷம் இரண்டு நொடி 'six o'clock, ten minute and tow seconds.

நல்ல நேரம் 'good time' and கெட்ட நேரம் 'bad time'

In general, morning time is considered very auspicious and everyone wants their morning to have a good start. If anything bad happens in the morning, someone might worry that the whole day would end up with similar events. Store owners especially want their first few transactions to be without any problem. If anyone argues or creates a problem in the store in the morning, the owner of the store would feel very bad and they might even yell at the customer saying காலங்காத்தாலெ வந்துட்டியே சாவு கிராக்கி 'you butcher! You started it right in the morning!' if anything bad happens to anyone during the day, that person might blame the person whom

he/she woke up to! (இண்ணெக்கி முழிச்ச முழியே சரியில்லெ 'To whom (I) woke up to wasn't right' lit. the eye on whom (I) woke up to wasn't right). For this reason, people also tend to be afraid to be seen first by someone else when waking up. People also tend to look at their own face in a mirror, or even see their own palms when they wake up in the morning, just to avoid anyone else's bad luck. Tamils consult the almanac which tells about the positions of starts and planets on each day. Based on how the stars are positioned in relation to other stars, they decide whether a particular time is a good time or a bad time. One and a half hour of each day is considered inauspicious (ராகுகாலம்) during which time no one would start a journey or any auspicious events like wedding, rituals, setting out for to accomplish something etc. ராகுகாலம் is determined based on how the star ராகு comes in contact with the sun each day. Below are the ராகுகாலம் hours during the week.

Monday (திங்கள்) 7:30 to 9am
 Saturday (சனி) 9.00 to 10:30 am
 Friday (வெள்ளி) 10:30am to 12pm
 Wednesday (புதன்) 12 to 1:30pm
 Thursday (வியாழன்) 1:30 to 3pm
 Tuesday (செவ்வாய்) 3 to 4:30 pm
 Sunday (ஞாயிறு) 4:30 to 6pm

This sequence of days pertaining to ராகுகாலம் is usually remembered by the following expression:

திருவாரூர் சன்னிதியில் வெற்றிலையும் புஷ்பமும் விற்ற செட்டியர் ஞானியானார்

'The merchant who sold betel leaf and flowers by the side of the Thiruvavarur temple became a saint'.

This and similar other expressions are used to remember the above sequence of ராகுகாலம் days.

Day	Raghu (ராகு)	Kuligai (குளிகை)	Emagandam (எம கண்டம் -Right time for the god of death)
Sunday (ஞாயிறு - கிழமை)	4.30 - 6.00pm	3.00 - 4.30	12.00 - 1.30
Monday (திங்கள் - கிழமை)	7.30 - 9.00pm	1.30 - 4.30	10.30 - 12.00
Tuesday (செவ்வாய் - கிழமை)	3.00 - 4.30pm	12.00 - 1.30	9.00 - 10.30
Wednesday (புதன் - கிழமை)	12.00 - 1.30pm	10.30 - 12.00	12.00 - 1.30
Thursday (வியாழன் - கிழமை)	1.30 - 3.00 Pm	9.00 - 10.30	6.00 - 7.30
Friday (வெள்ளி - கிழமை)	10.30 - 12.00 Pm	7.30 - 9.00	3.00 - 4.30

Saturday (சனி – கிழமை) 9.00 – 10.30Pm 6.00 – 7.30 1.30 – 3.00

Traditional Tamil belief takes the star system very seriously and considers that everyone's life is predetermined by the positions of the stars in relation to other stars and the planets.

Tamil Calendar

The Tamil calendar, based on the old Hindu solar calendar, had twelve months. In general, the Tamil months start around the 14th or 15th of English months. So, each Tamil month spans between the last half and first half of every English month. The Tamil months have around 30 days. However, the number of days varies by year. For example, கார்த்திகை had 30 days in 1997 and 29 in 1998. Below are the names and dates of the Tamil months starting with the Tamil new year for 1997 – 2004:

Tamil month	English month	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
சித்திரை (New year)	April	14	14	14	13	13	13	14	13
வைகாசி	May	15	15	15	14	14	14	15	14
ஆனி	June	15	15	15	15	14	15	15	15
ஆடி	July	17	17	17	16	16	16	17	16
ஆவணி	August	17	17	18	16	17	17	18	17
புரட்டாசி	September	17	17	18	16	17	17	18	17
ஐப்பசி	October	17	18	18	17	17	17	18	17
கார்த்திகை	November	16	17	17	16	16	16	17	16
மார்கழி	December	16	16	16	15	15	16	16	16
தை (Harvest month)	January	14	14	15	14	14	14	15	15
மாசி	February	12	13	13	13	12	12	13	13
பங்குனி	March	14	15	15	14	14	14	15	14