

Comments on L2/10-194

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In L2/10-194, Ganesan requests that the chillu marker be encoded not for writing Sanskrit but for transliterating Malayalam. He says that when the nukta has been accepted for encoding for Grantha despite its not being required for Sanskrit, why not the chillu marker.

I already considered this issue when I submitted my proposal L2/09-372. I have always made it a point to think out things as well as possible before committing them to a formal submission to the UTC, may I say unlike those who propose spurious characters like a Grantha OM and claim semantic distinction for “chillus” in Sanskrit.

As a result of such deliberation I have all along been adhering to a single unwavering stand on this issue. **A character that is not needed for Sanskrit may be encoded in Unicode Grantha if it would be practically useful and only if it would not affect the representation of Sanskrit in Unicode Grantha.**

Ever since my very first official submission to Unicode regarding Grantha, which was my “Comments on Ganesan’s proposal” document L2/09-316, I have maintained this stand – I quote myself from L2/09-316 p 8 (with underlining new):

We agree that enabling the transliteration in Grantha of other languages than Sanskrit is good in itself, and will help the popularization of the script and so we accept it when, for example, Mr Ganesan suggests the inclusion of the symbols for short vowels E and O. These [sic] is acceptable because it changes neither the current behaviour of the script nor the relation of the script with its natural language, Sanskrit. The demarcation line is, however, that no change should be made to the script that would damage the glyphic or behavioural nature of the script as it exists, or the way that the script is used to denote its natural language.

Later, in my proposal L2/09-372, I wrote in p 45:

Though Grantha is traditionally used only for Sanskrit, if the use of Grantha to write Sanskrit is to be perpetuated, and newer works in Sanskrit (such as textbooks for secular subjects) are to be created, the script should be extended to support transliteration of some sounds not existing in Sanskrit but occurring in other-language names of people and places which may

practically need to be mentioned in Sanskrit texts. ... It is however to be held in mind that such extending must be done in a way that will not affect the way Grantha represents Sanskrit, since Sanskrit is the native language for Grantha.

Then in my recent document L2/10-267 p 9:

... a script may be extended to denote languages that are not native to it only in such a way as is really practically required, and that too in such a way as does not affect the way the script represents its native language(s) in the first place. A script may be used to represent words of languages non-native to it, but it is not required that it is as capable as the respective native scripts of those languages in that task.

Ganesan, on the other hand, has been repeatedly altering his stand without providing proper reason for doing so. On the very chillu issue which is being considered here, he first claimed in his proposal that the “chillus” in Grantha cause difference in meaning. I have shown in detail in my document L2/09-316 (Comments on Ganesan’s proposal) by examining L2/09-141 (Ganesan’s original proposal) how he first baselessly claimed that writing words with or without “Grantha chillus” changes the meaning. Some relevant passages from Ganesan’s proposal L2/09-141 claiming semantic distinction are given below:

There are many words where the meaning is lost if the contrast between chillu consonant and consonant conjunct with vertical stacking of consonants or consonant with explicit virama (produced using ZWNJ)

...

There are whole books (e.g., Raaghava PaaNDaviiyam) written with different chillu consonants occurring in the middle of words. If the chillus are converted to something else (e.g., stacked conjunct) the meaning will change producing a punning effect.

...

For example, in the famous Bhagavat-giitaa, different commentaries change the meaning depending on the chillu presence or absence, to bring out various philosophical points.

Even in his later updated proposal L2/09-345 (as also in 09-141), he has claimed (in pp 4-6) that words like sanmārgaṃ, janmaṃ (sic), bhagavatkāryaṃ, utkaṭa show distinction of meaning when written with or without “Grantha chillus”.

In his document L2/10-154 he quoted, as support for his own arguments regarding the touching virama form, Dr R Krishnamurti Shastri's words given in my own proposal L2/09-372 p 66 wherein was contained this sentence:

Whether the vowel-absence-marker is added, or the special vowelless form is used, either way no difference is created in the meaning of words:

Ganesan did not bother to try to negate Dr Shastri on the matter of the semantic equality but quoted Dr Shastri in support of his own desire to denounce the touching virama form. If Ganesan accepts Dr Shastri as authority, then he must concede the semantic equality issue.

Later, the semantic equality of the various virama forms as attested by Dr Shastri in my proposal L2/09-372 p 66 was upheld by the recommendations committee in their document L2/10-167 pp 3-4 which said:

If the representations are truly equivalent and there is truly no semantic difference between chillu and non-chillu representation of texts, then the rendering as chillu or conjunct is a freely variable choice that can be worked out in font software. No underlying difference in encoding is warranted. The encoding model is therefore "pure" in terms of using the virama, which fits with the "script agnostic" nature of the Sanskrit text as documented.

Now in L2/10-194, Ganesan says, once more quoting the recommendations document L2/10-167 which in turn quotes Dr Shastri from my proposal:

Chillus not creating Semantic difference may be valid for Sanskrit texts.

However, that statement is not valid of Dravidian language texts.

Now has Ganesan accepted the fact that the so called "Grantha chillus" – more properly termed virama ligatures – do not cause semantic difference solely on the basis of Dr Shastri's words? If yes, then **how did Ganesan previously so emphatically state that the various virama forms cause difference in meaning?** How can Ganesan make such a totally baseless false statement in such a serious thing as a formal submission to the UTC? If Ganesan has for other reasons come to accept the absence of semantic distinction, why does Ganesan not acknowledge or mention those reasons anywhere?

Ganesan does not have a single logical stand of his own in this matter. He alters his arguments but persists in his illogical insistence that a chillu marker should be encoded. His only agenda seems to be the encoding of a Grantha chillu marker, for whatever reason. **His arguments do not seem to care whether the chillu marker is needed for Sanskrit or for Malayalam being written in Grantha, but just that it is encoded.**

I have pointed out many times that encoding a chillu marker will break the semantic equivalence between the virama forms in Sanskrit and hence it should not be encoded. **The recommendations document** recognized this, and also the endorsement of Dr Shastri on this issue, and hence **advocated not encoding a chillu marker**. Various Vedic and Sanskrit scholars of Tamil Nadu using Grantha have also endorsed the view that no character that breaks the representation of Sanskrit in Grantha should be included in the Unicode form of Grantha, as evidenced by the scholars who have affixed their signatures in L2/10-233 and among whom are two Presidential Awardees. I do hope that the UTC will honour the request of the native Vedic and Sanskrit scholars.

As for encoding the chillu marker to support the transliteration of Malayalam in Grantha, and considering that the Devanagari script is much more widely used than the Grantha script, I ask the same question I already asked in L2/09-316 p 8:

Would Mr Ganesan suggest a chillu marker for transliterating Malayalam for Devanagari too?

Or, what I asked recently in L2/10-267:

If it is desired to add a 'chillu marker' to Grantha to enable it to denote a language that it was never intended to denote, i.e. retain the Malayalam chillu/virama semantic distinction, then why can this not escalate to the point where artificial characters are proposed for Grantha (for that matter for any other Indic or non-Indic script) to denote the Bengali Khanda TA, Tamil Āytam, Telugu TSA and DZA, Sindhi implosives, Limbu glottal stop, Gurmukhi Tippi and Addak, Sinhala prenasalized consonants etc, all of which are specific characteristics of a single Indic script, citing some possible need for transliterating these scripts into Grantha? It is obvious that such proposals would be meaningless.

While it may be quite validly argued that the probability of a need arising for translating Malayalam words into Grantha is much more than that relating to Bengali Khanda TA etc seeing as those languages/scripts are geologically and demographically distant from Grantha, my referring to the Tamil Āytam and the Telugu TSA and DZA still stands. Even if such extensions are done, I repeat my stand that such extensions must be done without affecting the native Sanskrit-Grantha relationship. It is clear that the chillu marker breaks this all-important relationship.

Ganesan goes on to claim in L2/10-194 that:

Grantha script is historically applied not just for Sanskrit language, but also Dravidian languages not only in India, but also in Cambodia and Thailand.

Ganesan has, as always, not provided any attestation for this. When even full-time academic scholars and recognized experts in their respective subjects like Dr Peter Scharf propose characters in their documents such as N3366 only with suitable *real* attestation from authentic sources, I do not understand how Ganesan can ask for characters to be encoded based only on his unsubstantiated statements and tall claims, or by providing spurious samples from such non-existent sources like “Sanskrita Granthalipi Sabha, Chennai” which I have commented on in L2/09-316 p 20.

Ganesan’s claim of the Grantha script being used for Dravidian languages not only in India but also in Cambodia and Thailand can only be judged on par with his false claim of the existence of a Grantha OM which is in fact an Oriya OM as shown in L2/10-263 and -267, or his claim of having personally seen that character in magazines and temples and of priests attesting to it. Why does Ganesan not understand that such claims should never be made without attestation and proof?

It is to be noted here that I proposed the nukta for Grantha without claiming that it exists in actual usage in Grantha, unlike the above claim of Ganesan or his claim in L2/09-141 that RRA, LLLA and NNNA are used in Grantha. **The proposal of the nukta is on the line of the proposal of the characters to denote the short vowels E and O.** It is clearly accepted by all that these characters are not in contemporary (or archaic) usage in Grantha but are proposed based on the archaic usage of characters of this shape to denote the short vowels *in the Tamil script*. There is no objection to the encoding of these characters from any party. Similarly, the Grantha nukta is proposed based on the usage of such a character in the Kannada script, without any baseless claim that it is already used in Grantha.

As for the argument that when a nukta, which is not needed for Sanskrit, is encoded for Grantha why not the chillu marker, the reason should be clear enough. The nukta, while indeed not needed for Sanskrit, *does not conflict with the representation of Sanskrit in Grantha*. The chillu marker, on the other hand, *does conflict with the representation of Sanskrit in Grantha* by disruption the semantic equality between the various forms of writing vowelless consonants in Grantha.

While the situation of the chillu-s in Malayalam being separately encoded and hence intentionally precluding such a semantic equality for Malayalam cannot be helped due to

such semantic distinction being attested for the native language of the Malayalam script viz Malayalam, such a semantic inequality should not be introduced in the Grantha script yet to be encoded in Unicode when the *opposite* of semantic distinction, namely semantic equality, is attested between the various Grantha virama forms for the native language of the Grantha script viz Sanskrit. I have in detail in my previous documents such as L2/09-316 pointed out the flaws in trying to over-extend a script in an imaginary attempt to make it *as capable as other scripts* in representing the native languages of those scripts.

The nukta is indeed a new suggestion, but so was Ganesan's own suggestion of the short vowels E and O. I myself had no intention at first of encoding a short vowel E and O for Grantha, since it is not required for Sanskrit. However, I accepted that good idea from Ganesan's proposal and in fact I have acknowledged Ganesan to this effect in my proposal document L2/09-372 p 52. Since Devanagari has such two short-E/O characters it would make sense for Grantha too since the probability of needed to transliterate Dravidian languages which have those short vowels into Grantha is not negligible.

Therefore I do not have any fixed stand that I should reject anything that Ganesan proposes (may I say unlike Ganesan's attitude in attempting to reject the touching virama in his document L2/10-062). Thus when Ganesan's own idea of encoding unattested short vowels E and O for Grantha was accepted by all *including me*, Ganesan should not grudge an unattested nukta being encoded for Grantha for its potential utility.

Ganesan should also **not quote the encoding of the nukta as favourable example for his own suggestion of encoding a chillu marker**, for the very simple reason, which I have been repeating myself on, that the chillu marker disrupts the Sanskrit-Grantha relationship and the semantic equality of the virama forms.

The short vowels E and O were Ganesan's idea, and they are accepted because they do not conflict with Sanskrit. The nukta was my idea, and it was accepted because it does not conflict with Sanskrit. **The chillu marker, Ganesan's idea, should however not be accepted because it does conflict with Sanskrit.**

Preserving the Sanskrit-Grantha relationship is paramount, and in accordance with the principles of Unicode. It is my understanding that Unicode came into being to enable the encoding of characters from human scripts such that those scripts may be properly handled in computers and properly represent their own native languages. The encoding of a chillu marker is against such a principle, and hence should not be done.

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