

Mahamahopadhyaya, Veda Bhashya Ratnam
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To the concerned officials of Unicode:

By request of Shriramana Sharma, who has been working on bringing Grantha to computers and who has submitted to you for this purpose a proposal to add Grantha to Unicode, I provide the following clarifications:

In my previous endorsement letter to Sharma's Grantha proposal, I have stated that in Grantha there are two forms of writing a vowelless consonant. One uses the mark [॑] and another is the "special vowelless form", such as [॑]. In his proposal, Sharma has called this special form a virama ligature.

Now, as shown by Sharma in his proposal, the mark [॑] may be written either clearly away from the consonant as [॑] or touching the consonant, [॑]. Both these touching and non-touching forms are seen even in books published by our Heritage India Educational Trust today. For some consonants such as ṭa there may be a cursive line joining the consonant and the mark, so: [॑].

Sharma pointed out to me that in the non-touching vowelless form, the mark _॑ indicating an initial /r/ would come between the consonant and the mark [॑], so: [॑]. This is quite natural to the Grantha script. Certainly in the touching form like [॑] the mark _॑ cannot come in between.

Thus it may quite correctly be said that there are three different forms of writing vowelless consonants and my previous statement about "two forms" is not to be taken as contradictory. One generally says "two forms" only because one would normally not consider the touching and non-touching forms as distinct since it is mostly just a question of cursive writing. However, if in computers the case of the mark _॑ needs special treatment and if it matters, then certainly one can/should say that there are three different ways of writing vowelless consonants.

Sharma tells me that some have claimed that the touching form is not seen nowadays. This is not at all true. Sharma has already provided samples for the touching form on pages 21 and 35 of his proposal. He has drawn these samples from contemporary publications of ours which are still being re-printed as per demand. Therefore these touching forms are still in use. Sharma also correctly argues that in handwritten Grantha, touching forms are more often seen because of the convenience in cursive writing.

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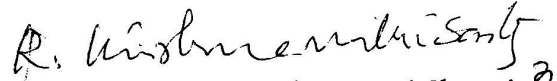
I must also underline the fact that all the three different ways of writing vowelless consonants, for example: ढ्र ढ्र ढ्र will never cause any change in meaning. The Grantha script has been used for Sanskrit and Sanskrit alone. In Sanskrit such written forms are immaterial, as I have already said in my previous letter. Let there be no doubt about this.

The Unicode form of Grantha must therefore represent the Sanskrit language correctly. Without conflict with that, if anyone wants, the Grantha script may also be extended to denote some words from other languages too, but within reason.

Sharma suggests that just like in Devanagari there is the 'dot' (which is apparently called 'nukta') added to consonants to denote foreign sounds like /f/, in Grantha also a nukta may be used to denote such sounds to improve the usefulness of the script. If this will not conflict with the writing of Sanskrit in Grantha, then this may be done. However, under no circumstances should any artificial character be included which will affect the writing of Sanskrit in Grantha. This writing of Sanskrit in Grantha is of paramount importance. All the rest is only secondary.

I request the Unicode officials to also add the Grantha characters for Vedic. I have already remarked that Sharma has well documented these. These are very important and essential for Vedic publications like ours to be made using Unicode in the future.

Sincerely,


Professor R Krishnamurti Shastri, 20.7.10.

Retired Principal, Sanskrit College, Mylapore, Chennai.

Dated – 20~~09~~-Jul-30.