

## Comments on L2/09-405, 10-297, -298 and -303

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2010-Aug-21

### L2/09-405 “Number of viramas in Malayalam and Grantha” etc

I will consider sections (a) and (b) of this document of Ganesan in a separate document. In section (c) Ganesan has given his arguments saying that there are only two “viramas” (whereas it should be “virama forms”) in Grantha. As I have already discussed this argument in detail in my previous document L2/10-267, I will just recount the main points.

I have clearly demonstrated that the touching virama form in Grantha is not due to the carelessness of presses and that it is seen even today in both written and printed Grantha. Hence just claiming that it does not exist is meaningless. Dr Shastri in his L2/10-285 has clarified that if the touching virama form needs to be considered distinctly (for the matter of handling the repha) then it may. Therefore there are certainly three virama *forms* and they cannot be disclaimed away. Whether three different virama *characters* are encoded for Grantha or not is a different matter, and I point out that I have never till now asked for three such characters to be encoded in any of my documents.

Ganesan remarks that since the close relationship of Grantha and Malayalam was not considered in my proposal, I did not provide for the importance of having a chillu marker sign to create “prepausal” consonants. As I said above, I will discuss the Grantha-Malayalam relationship separately and show that such a relationship does not warrant the encoding of a chillu marker for Grantha. Even if, as Ganesan has generously allowed in L2/10-303, the chillu marker is renamed a ligating virama, the encoding and implementation must be such that the semantic identity between the various virama forms is preserved. Even Ganesan could not refute the semantic identity, which is why, in L2/10-284, he asked for a Grantha chillu marker for writing Malayalam “even if it is not required for Sanskrit”. It is however not known why he first claimed semantic difference even for Sanskrit in his previous documents until and including his final proposal L2/09-345.

As for “chillus” helping the identification of word boundaries, I have already rejected this in L2/09-316, as has Dr Shastri in his letter given in L2/09-372 p 66. I will return to “prepausal” later in this document when I consider Ganesan’s L2/10-303.

In section (d) Ganesan elaborates on the topic of “chillus” in Grantha causing, according to him, semantic differences. This has also been rejected by Dr Shastri in his endorsement letter to my proposal mentioned above, as also in his later document 10-285. Sixteen different native Vedic/Sanskrit scholars of Tamil Nadu using Grantha, all experts in their own specializations and three among whom are Presidential awardees and one a Mahamahopadhyaya, have also rejected any such semantic difference between the various virama forms of Grantha, as seen in the documents L2/10-233 and -283.

This being so, Ganesan claims that priests working in Hindu temples certified that the “Grantha chillus” cause semantic difference. Without calling into question the existence or academic qualifications of any such people Ganesan may have consulted, I merely point out that Ganesan did a volte face to this stand of his in L2/10-284 saying that semantic non-difference “may be true for Sanskrit”. This itself demonstrates that Ganesan has no evidence for his claim of semantic difference in Sanskrit.

In section (e) Ganesan claims that “There are NO words in any Indian language to write Vocalic LL vowel sign”. If this is true, then Ganesan should explain as to why diverse scripts have such a character? Quite apart from the Indian scripts like Devanagari, scripts such as Tibetan, Myanmar and Balinese descended from Brahmi and spread far and wide away from India have these characters. There is, to my knowledge, no evidence to suggest that this sound occurs in the native languages of those scripts. Further, the only common language which may be said to have influenced all those languages, whether directly or not, is Sanskrit. It follows that at least Sanskrit has this sound. Among those who know Sanskrit, it is well understood that this sound, while not occurring in the Sanskrit language proper, has a part in the Tantric mantra-s called *bijākṣara-s* (“seed syllables”), and since most, if not all, original Tantric texts are in Sanskrit, scripts supporting Sanskrit came to have the vocalic LL as well. [This may be independently confirmed by the UTC in consulting with Sanskrit experts like Dr Peter Scharf, if necessary – so I am not making a baseless claim.]

The point is, Ganesan, without pausing to at all grok the nature and content of these scripts, makes statements like “NO words ... to write Vocalic LL”. (Whether a *bijākṣara* can be considered a word or not, seeing as it is not technically part of language, is a different question. Ganesan did not draw any such technical distinction to disqualify a *bijākṣara* from being a word. His statement can only be said to mean the absence of *any* use for Vocalic LL.)

As for Ganesan’s suggestion of ZWJ being used, if needed, to make the distinction between the spacing and non-spacing forms of Vocalic L(/LL), Ganesan perhaps is not

aware that the sequence CONSONANT + ZWJ + VOWEL SIGN, across Indic scripts but exemplified in Bengali, is used for consonant–vowel-sign ligatures. In Grantha, there are ligatures of consonants with the vowel signs for Vocalic L(/LL) as shown in my proposal L2/09-372 p 20. The sequence Ganesan suggests would be required for the requesting of such a ligature, and hence its use for requesting a non-spacing variant is ruled out. As for “Whether on the right side or subjoined, Vocalic L does not vary in meaning at all”, I am glad that Ganesan and I see eye-to-eye on *this* semantic equivalence at least. However, one can still not rule out the distinct encoding of non-spacing variants of the vocalic L/LL vowel signs merely based on the semantic identity and I shall discuss this further in a separate document.

In section (f) Ganesan says that the Vedic characters of Grantha “are secondary to main letters of the script”. What more can I say than that Ganesan is not listening to the *real* and *major* users of Grantha in Tamil Nadu today – Vedic scholars, students and priests – who *vitally* need these Vedic characters, as voiced by them at the end of L2/10-233 and -283.

### L2/10-297 “Handwritten styles in Tamil, Grantha” etc

In this document Ganesan fails to address the issue of the repha in relation to the virama forms of Grantha, specifically the spacing and touching forms. As noted by the recommendations committee in L2/10-053 p 10, the issue of the repha must be handled.

Ganesan says that he has “also consulted several Grantha experts on this matter”. Why does he not mention them by name? Why does he not understand the need to do so in an academically serious thing as a UTC proposal?

In this document, Ganesan has merely repeated his stand of L2/10-062 and -154 that there is either no touching virama or “no need for an atomically encoded touching virama”. I have clearly explained, in my various Grantha-related documents starting from my proposal L2/09-372 up to and including L2/10-267, the reasons for my analysing the script as having three virama *forms* (not “three viramas”). In L2/10-285, Dr R Krishnamurti Shastri has explained that while *generally* the script is analysed as having only two forms of writing a vowelless consonant, if the repha issue is a matter, then certainly one can/should say that there are three virama forms as analysed by me.

Ganesan has not bothered to logically refute those arguments in any way. On the contrary, he has tried to say that there is no touching virama at all and that they are “merely due to the carelessness of presses”. Such an attitude of making statements without logical arguments or proof will not help a sensible discussion to take place. Without providing logical arguments against the need to treat the spacing and touching virama

forms as distinct due to the matter of the repha, Ganesan should not repeat his previous statements brushing off the touching virama as “a mere handwritten variant”.

Therefore the existence of the three virama forms as documented by the samples shown by me and endorsed by the various native Grantha scholars cannot be brushed off, and Unicode Grantha should, in *some* way, support the representation of these three forms.

I should note, however, that now that the recommendations committee has recommended in 10-299 the encoding of a ligating virama in lieu of the offensive “chillu marker”, the question of how the three different virama forms, the semantic equality between them and the repha issue are to be handled is to be discussed separately.

### L2/10-298 “Tamil letters with numbered superscripts”

Again, Ganesan has not read my Extended Tamil proposal L2/10-256 properly at all nor attempted to grasp its contents or intent. I have pointed out that due to the various ways in existence of extending the Tamil script to represent the Sanskrit language, it is necessary to encode separate characters for this purpose which may alternatively be presented as Tamil written forms with superscript digits or as Grantha characters.

I have also advanced various other reasons why Extended Tamil needs to be encoded separately (with or without the word EXTENDED in the character names). Ganesan has not even attempted to analyse those arguments and present logical objections to any flaws in my reasoning. He, as is his penchant, makes unsubstantiated statistical claims like “the (use of) numbered sequences (i.e. Tamil letters with superscript digits) is like 99%”.

As to the form of Extended Tamil using Grantha-style written forms, Ganesan says that “we can look into this in a few years time after Unicode Grantha starts working”. Ganesan has obviously not read or understood my arguments as to how the Extended Tamil proposal is independent of the Grantha proposal and how the Extended Tamil characters should be considered as one irrespective of whether Grantha-style characters or Tamil-style characters with superscript digits are used.

As to “there is no real urgency in this matter” – it may not be urgent for Ganesan, but those involved with publishing Sanskrit texts in Tamil Nadu (which includes me and which is why I made this proposal) will disagree with him.

Further, urgency is not the sole basis for encoding. The Indian rupee sign may be said to be being quickly pushed through the process of encoding because there is an urgency in its encoding. However, there are so many other scripts which are totally historical, like Kaithi, but these have also been encoded in due course of time and process.

As to “Tamil scholars and Tamil Computing professional societies need to be consulted on this issue”, Ganesan has not said why. The Extended Tamil proposal does not affect the writing of the Tamil language in the Tamil script anyway (may I say unlike the now-rejected “chillu marker” affecting the writing of Sanskrit in Grantha and proposed by Ganesan). The Extended Tamil proposal is for the writing of Sanskrit in Tamil, and hence if at all scholars must be consulted, it is Sanskrit scholars. I have mentioned in my Extended Tamil proposal p 13 that I have consulted with Dr Mani Dravid and Dr Venugopala Sharma who are both Sanskrit scholars. Since there are no real complicated issues involved in Extended Tamil – if it is understood properly – I did not see the need to go all out and consult as many scholars as I did for the Grantha proposal. If necessary I can do that too.

Therefore the Extended Tamil proposal is to be considered on its own merits and need not be made to wait for the final publication of Unicode Grantha, though the UTC, as per its own priorities, may decide to consider the proposal after having cleared up all Grantha-related issues (and forwarding the encoding of the script to the WG2 level?).

## L2/10-303 asking for the name LIGATING PREPAUSAL VIRAMA

Ganesan has perhaps not observed the following paragraph in my document L2/10-267 p 5. I quote (from myself):

*Ganesan has once more used the adjective “prepausal” in connection with these so-called “chillus”. I have shown in both my comments on Ganesan’s Grantha proposal (L2/09-316 p 2) and in my own Grantha proposal L2/09-372 (pp 22, 23) that these virama ligatures are also seen in the middle of words and so are in no way “prepausal”. Ganesan’s repeated usage of this word indicates that Ganesan has not properly understood the nature of the script.*

As to Dr Gruenendahl’s usage of the word, I am separately writing to him asking for a clarification in his own words on the issue. However, I am sure of his reply because the evidence of the usage of ligating virama forms even in non-“prepausal” positions is there and is irrefutable, as shown in my previous documents mentioned in the quoted paragraph.

In summary, the word “prepausal” should not be included in the name of the character as requested by Ganesan due to the relevant virama forms being used even in non-prepausal positions.

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