

## Follow-up to ASTERISK ABOVE proposal L2/10-349

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This document is a follow-up to L2/10-349. It affirms that the character proposed by that document should be encoded. The intention of this document is to update the UTC as to feedback received from manuscript/Sanskrit/Vedic scholars regarding my proposal.

I had CC-ed the submission of my VEDIC TONE ASTERISK ABOVE proposal L2/10-349 to Dr Peter Scharf whom the UTC has previously consulted on the encoding of Vedic characters. Dr Scharf commented on my submission:

*Your argument seems mostly sound to me. I have just one question: Do you think the asterisk is a substitute for some other mark that is not available in the printer's repertoire? To settle this kind of question, we would try to find manuscript evidence of the use of the sign, that is hand-written evidence rather than printed. If the asterisk is a substitute for another sign, there is little motivation to encode an additional Indic script glyph similar to the asterisk in the Vedic extensions block, because the sign is actually a Roman script asterisk used in place of something else. On the other hand, if there is an asterisk-like glyph used in a manuscript, it has an innately different sense, usage, and properties from the Roman asterisk; hence there is greater motivation to encode it in the Vedic Extensions block.*

While I was/am confident that the asterisk is not a substitute for an unavailable glyph, in accordance with Dr Scharf's suggestion I consulted Dr Gerhard Ehlers who is a manuscript expert at the Orientabteilung of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin and who has helped me with feedback and manuscript samples on my Grantha proposal. I asked Dr Ehlers whether he could provide any manuscriptal evidence for the use of such an asterisk-like character in Sama Veda texts, to which he responded in the *negative*. While I forwarded this response from Dr Ehlers to Dr Scharf, I separately pointed out (emphasis new):

*Of the sources for this character that I have provided, while two (refs 1 and 2) are somewhat (relatively) old (1985 and 1976) and of a period when paucity of lithographic glyphs in typesetter's repertoire could be suggested, the last (ref 3) is much more recent (2008) and entirely composed digitally where such a paucity of glyphs cannot be suggested so quickly.*

*I further point out that the editor of ref 3 has intentionally replaced the KA-s of ref 1 Archika with asterisks as shown on page 3 of my proposal, and one can hardly suggest that the editor did not have an above-base KA which he replaced by asterisks. I spoke to a close friend and sahaadhyayii (co-student with one guru) of the editor, and he confirmed that the editor had intentionally replaced the KA-s with asterisks wherever there was an independent svarita that was not a kampa.*

*Thus what you speak of: "innately different sense, usage, and properties from the Roman asterisk" is there, in my opinion, and so as you say: "there is greater motivation to encode it in the Vedic Extensions block."*

To the above, I must add that the KA is still used for the 'aggravated' (i.e. kampa) svarita. **The usage of the asterisk instead of the KA in particular contexts indicates specific intent of users in using the asterisk as a svara marker with unique semantics.**

Dr Scharf asked whether there would be any technical problem with using the "Roman asterisk", probably meaning 20F0 COMBINING ASTERISK ABOVE. I have already considered this in my proposal. I pointed out that many of the existing svara markers in the Vedic Extensions block are glyphically alike to existing diacritics (circumflex, macron, circumflex below, dot below and breve below; see my CANDRA ABOVE proposal L2/09-344 p 4) but these were encoded separately nevertheless. (In this regard I note that my CANDRA ABOVE proposal L2/09-344 used this very argument of precedent and was accepted.)

The intention in separate encoding is possibly, as I wrote to Dr Scharf:

*... practical convenience. Rendering engines would have to render properly the combination of INDIC SYLLABLE + VEDIC SVARA MARKER (+ VEDIC SVARA MARKER ...) by properly adjusting and placing the marker w.r.t the base syllable. As the size and positioning of each diacritic vary, I presume it would be convenient for implementers of Unicode to have a distinct list of diacritics – by the name of "Vedic tone markers" – that are being used for Vedic than to try to implement support for all the variegated (much more than in Vedic) Roman diacritics that are present in Unicode. As you well know handling multiple Roman diacritics often involves just stacking them, but Vedic characters are not always so easy.*

To this Dr Scharf responded that this argument might indeed support distinct encoding.

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