Introduction
In L2/12-353, Dr. Naga Ganesan has mentioned letters from two epigraphists, Dr. S. Raju, and Dr. R. Nagaswamy, and a linguist, Dr. E. Annamalai, in support of adding Tamil letters to Grantha. Being an epigraphist or linguist alone is not sufficient to judge this issue. One has to be cognizant of problems in data entry and use of a digital corpus. Their letters do not discuss any of these complexities. These letters were written after the report by INFITT, L2/11-026. Since these letters simply support Dr. Naga Ganesan’s earlier requests, the INFITT report should be deemed to have considered their recommendations and found no justification for adding to the Grantha repertoire those Tamil characters that were not part of the traditional Grantha character set. The Government of India proposal which UTC has approved for Grantha encoding is based on this judgment. In any case, I discuss below why there is no merit in the case presented by the letters Ganesan has procured after the INFITT report.

Dr. E. Annamalai’s letter
Of the above-mentioned letters, Dr. Annamalai is not an epigraphist and has not offered any evidence in his letter (L2/11-006) that he is aware of the issues involved.

Dr. S. Raju’s letter
Dr. Raju has said in his letter (as translated from Tamil by Dr. E. Annamalai),

“I believe that Tamil texts were written in Grantha in the Palghat region is a situation just like the Tamil devotional compositions were written in Grantha in South East Asian countries. Justice Chengottu Velan has mentioned that Kangaiyam Mandradiar of Kaadaiyur, who comes in the line of Kangeyan, the author of the dictionary Uriccol Nighandu, signed his name in Grantha.”

Dr. Raju’s statement that the Grantha texts in the Palghat region were similar to Grantha texts of Tamil devotional compositions offers no reason for including the relevant letters in the Grantha repertoire. I should point out that Mr. Mani M. Manivannan in his report for INFITT, L2/11-026, which considered the Thai manuscripts in detail, concluded, “As such it is clear that Marr’s paper or the Thai Grantha manuscripts referred to does not in any way support the encoding of these
characters.”¹ As for Raju’s hearsay evidence of some third party having seen some fourth person signing his name in Grantha offers no support for L2/12-039.

Dr. R. Nagaswamy’s letter

As for Dr. Nagaswamy, his statement that “I have read and approve the Govt. of India proposal to encode Grantha script in its entirety for use in the web and computers” shows that he was not familiar with the contents of L2/11-026. As such, his views should be considered superseded by L2/11-026. Moreover, while Nagaswamy claims, “I am considered a leading authority on Tamil and Sanskrit language and scripts…” a careful examination of his work demonstrates that he is not very reliable as an epigraphist. His work also demonstrates a remarkable lack of reliability regarding Tamil script and pronunciation as discussed below.

In Mirror of Tamil and Sanskrit, a book Nagaswamy has published earlier this year, he has discussed a temple inscription, which deals with the appointment of a bard (pāṇaṭ in Tamil) to sing in front of the temple deity and to train two classes of temple women called Taļiyilār and Tēvaraṭiyār.² Given below is an excerpt of what Nagaswamy had written.

A new service was started in the temple of Thiruvaidaimarudūr creating an enactment for singing the Thirup-padiayams and also arranging for the dancing girls of the temple to sing in the 9th year of Vikramachola, the son of Kulottunga II. The service was called “Bānap-peru” (Bānap-pani). This was a royal appointment issued by Vikramachola and a certain IrumudiCholan alias Acancala Perariayan was appointed to do the service...The record states that he was to sing in the presence of God of the Thiruvaidaimarudūr temple and direct other Bānas for arranging the Dancing girls to sing (Thiruvaidai marudur - udayarukku - pāduvum, ikkoyil Taļiyilārai pāduvikkavum ikkoyil Devaradiyārāi pāduvikkavum Bānappērāka). The Bānas were great singers from the Sangam age and we find the Bānas, Yālpāna was a close friend of Jnāna-sambandar and again we find the Bānas were appointed in the Great temple of Thanjavur. According to this inscription the service should be added to the temple service and the Bāna should be paid one kalam of paddy per day to the Perariayan for singing. He should be allotted one residence as Bānak-kudiyiruppu as before…”

Nagaswamy’s above findings are replete with errors. The text of the inscription is presented in Exhibit 1.

¹Manivannan (2011:16)
²Nagaswamy (2012:373-74)
One can see very clearly that the king in whose reign this inscription was issued was named Kulottunaka and not Vikrama. More importantly, the Tamil word which Nagaswamy renders in English as Bāna is பாண (pāna).³ ‘Pāna’ is a native Tamil word of Dravidian and not Indo-Aryan origin. The beginning consonant is ‘p’ and not ‘b’ as shown in the Dravidian Etymological Dictionary entry below.

Exhibit 1. Part of Tiruvitaimarutū grant to Pāna, South Indian Inscriptions, vol. 5, pp. 295-96

Exhibit 2. Dravidian Etymological Dictionary Entry for pāna

³In one instance (highlighted in blue), Nagaswamy renders the word பாண as pāṇa when it occurs as part of the name Yāḻpāṇa.
Now consider the translation of the same inscription by another scholar given below.⁴ [Emphasis mine]

In the ninth year of the reign of Śrī Kulottungakoladevar, it is agreed (this) first day of the ninth year that gold and paddy are to be provided as they were formerly provided for the pānar in this temple, at the rate of 1 kalam of paddy, measured by the ārkkāl, per person, for the basic living allowance (mutal kānipirṟṟapatī) for Īrumuṭicolaṇ Pirāṇ alias Acaṇcalapperayan—who is to sing for the Lord of Tiruvitaimarutu in Tiraimūṇāṭu in Uyyakoṇṭārvāḷanāṭu, who is to cause the taḷiyillār tevaratīyār to sing in the temple, and who is to dwell here as the person of this place responsible for the pānar—and for his descendants (vaṅśatār).

We, together with those servants of the temple (palapani nivantakārār) who are partners in this agreement, assign, as formerly to the pānar, the land necessary to produce this paddy and additional expense money—land that is part of the tevatāṇam of this god—as land for the support of pānar (pānakāmi), as their “livelihood” (jīvitam).

It is obvious that Nagaswamy has repeatedly rendered Tamil பாணகம்- as Bāṇa for which there is no basis in the inscription or in Tamil usage. Native Tamil words do not begin in ‘b’. Nagaswamy’s use of ‘b’ in ‘Bāṇa’ in place of ’p’ is evidently a case of hypercorrection based on the influence of Sanskrit.⁵ This is analogous to the hypercorrection of intervocalic -ɸ- in a Vedic Sanskrit text into -ʈ- in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, which I had discussed in L2/11-326. Inasmuch as Nagaswamy’s use of ‘b’ in place of ’p’ is no basis for including Sanskrit ‘b’ in Tamil repertoire, there is no basis for including Tamil LLLA in the Grantha repertoire, notwithstanding Nagaswamy’s “authority on Tamil and Sanskrit language and scripts”.

The reason for calling this Vedic use of LLLA as hypercorrection is that this is the reverse of what happens when a Tamil word containing -ʈ- is borrowed into Sanskrit. This can be seen in the Chintakamanta inscription, which has both Sanskrit and Tamil portions written in Grantha script. An excerpt of the inscriptive text is presented in Exhibit 3. In this inscription the Tamil word ஒஸ்ட்டூர்எ (Cōla) is rendered as Cōla (Chōla in Exhibit 3) in the Tamil portion in line 46 even as it is rendered as Cōḍa (Chōḍa in Exhibit 3) in the Sanskrit portion in line 42. This is another indication that LLLA in line 46 is borrowed from the Tamil script and was not a part of traditional Grantha script. That is why epigraphists like K. G. Krishnan have called LLLA used in line 46 as Tamil LLLA.

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⁴ Orr (1999:102)
⁵ In a Sanskrit music composition of Muttauḷāḍakavatār beginning in “paṅkavaktrām”, we find the name Bāṇabhadrā, in which the first component is a Sanskritized version of Tamil Paṇa-.
Mr. Maravanpulavu K. Sachithananthan’s letter

Dr. Ganesan has also cited a letter from Mr. Maravanpulavu K. Sachithananthan, a publisher, for printing some specific Tamil texts in the Grantha script to satisfy the request of one person, the royal priest of Thailand. According to Mr. Sachithananthan, although the priest uses Grantha script, he can read Tamil script. To satisfy the desire of one person, who can read the Tamil script in any case, altering the character set of Grantha, which will adversely affect the interests of millions of Tamils by adversely affecting the study of Tamil inscriptions is grossly unfair. This is especially so when it is not necessary.

Let us look at a text Mr. Sachithananthan has produced to satisfy his client. Consider Exhibits, 4, 5, and 6 below, which show excerpts from that text. Each exhibit shows a Tamil text in Tamil script followed by the same text rendered in Grantha script which includes characters that seem to have been invented to represent Tamil characters that are not part of traditional Grantha.

Each of the Exhibits 4, 5, and 6 has an occurrence of Tamil letter 聃 following Tamil ம. The relevant words are  தோ in Tiruvempāvai 1.2 and 2.1, and  சிலவோ in Tiruvempāvai 2.4. While the three occurrences are all cases of 聃 following Tamil ம, in each case they have been transcribed into Grantha using three different Grantha letters—letter ங in line 1.2, letter ஜ in line 2.1, and letter 聃 in line 2.4. Thus, according to Sachithananthan, ங, ஜ, and 聃 are all equivalent.

Now let us look at the transcription of ஃ in this work as seen in Exhibits 7 and 8 below.

What is rendered as ஃ in Exhibit 7 is rendered as ஃ in Exhibit 8. Obviously, for Sachithananthan ஃ and ஃ are equivalent.

Exhibit 9 below shows both ஃ and ஃ being transcribed with the cluster நஃ.
Exhibit 9 shows that Mr. Sachithananthan considers $\eta$ and $\eta$ to be equivalent. It should be noted that I have given only a few examples of such issues in Sachithananthan (2011). Thus in trying to convert a text in phonemic Tamil script into phonetic Grantha script, Sachithananthan seems to have no problems with transcribing one Tamil character using different Grantha characters and transcribing different Tamil characters with the same Grantha character. Given this situation, he might as well transcribe the Tamil text with characters in the existing Grantha set instead of requiring additional Grantha characters.

It would have been right for Sachithananthan to advise the Thai priest that the priest should read the Tamil text in Tamil script, which the priest knows or in the Thai script with whatever additional characters invented to transcribe Tamil. These two options will not impact the processing and use of Tamil inscriptive corpus which are important to several millions of Tamils. If Sachithananthan insists on transcribing Tamil text into Grantha, he can do so following the GOI approved proposal for encoding Grantha. $^9$

**Tamil texts in Grantha script**

Dr. Ganesan also has stated in L2/12-353 that the Grantha script “has been considered sacred and is used for transcribing holy texts from Dravidian languages (such as Tamil and Malayalam) for centuries.” It should be noted that the excerpt from *Textes sanskrits et tamouls de Thailande* (TSTT), which Ganesan provided in L2/11-034, show that Thai manuscripts were not precisely transcribing Tamil texts into Grantha. For instance, they were transcribing Tamil $t$ and $t$ identically. Interestingly, in his review of TSTT, John R. Marr writes $^{10}$:

Neelakanta Sarma has solved one riddle which baffled this reviewer (see JSS, LX, 2, 1972, 61-87, esp. pp. 63-4), the identity of the text in the MS fol. 179, beginning: *devaruḍḍināṇe taṟumum*…. Despite being wedged among Śaiva material, it is, he shows, the first decade of Nammāḻvār, Tiruvāyumoḷi, I, which begins: *Tiruvaḷuṭināṭ' eṇrum*…. (see pp. 89-90, photos. 136ff.)

$^9$Keeping in mind the phonemic nature of the Tamil script, instead of attempting to transcribe Tamil, Sachithananthan should have transliterated Tamil into Grantha. Of course, along with the transliteration, he should have tried to inform his client of the simple rules of Tamil pronunciation. That way, one can convert back and forth between Grantha and Tamil without any problem too.

$^{10}$Marr (1975: 498)
One can see that the Thai manuscript has transcribed \( t \) as \( r \). All these only confirm Manivannan’s conclusion in L2/11-026 that the Thai manuscripts do not support the case for adding the Tamil letters such as NNNA and LLLA to the Grantha set.

Other than the situation of Thai manuscripts already discussed, Ganesan did not produce any genuine evidence for his claim of Tamil texts being written in Grantha script. As L2/11-026 showed, Ganesan offered some hand-written samples as evidence of publication of such texts by ‘Samskrita Granthalipi Sabha, Chennai’. L2/11-026 showed that there is no record that ‘Samskrita Granthalipi Sabha, Chennai’ had ever existed. Clearly, any reasonable person is likely to conclude that Ganesan had fabricated his evidence and his above-mentioned statement has no merit whatsoever.

**Conclusion**

The supporting letters Ganesan has offered for the proposal do not show any awareness of the complexities related to creation and use of the digital corpus of inscriptions. On top of this, non-existent evidence is being cited repeatedly by Ganesan even though it has been discredited already by L2/11-026. Ganesan also continues to offer erroneous information deliberately regarding the use of LLLA and NNNA in Tamil inscriptions even after the right information is presented with evidence, as in the case of Chintakamanta inscription. The samples of Grantha use in Thai manuscripts also do not support the inclusion of NNNA and LLLA in the Grantha repertoire. Therefore, I request the Unicode Technical Committee to reject L2/12-039, the proposal for including NNNA and LLLA in the Grantha repertoire.

**References**


Nagaswamy, R. Mirror of Tamil and Sanskrit. Tamil Arts Academy, Chennai, 2012.


