

Feedback on L2/17-356 Proposal for DIYA Emoji

Shriramana Sharma, samjnaa-at-gmail-dot-com, India

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The proposal to encode DIYA by is significant as it contributes towards filling the lack of emojis required to represent important aspects of Indian/South Asian/South East Asian culture.

In regard to this, the Emoji Subcommittee writes in L2/17-380R p. 2 under section "Forwarded Encoding requests to UTC":

Add as OIL LAMP for generality

This seems to indicate that the name DIYA is overly specific and that it should be replaced with the term OIL LAMP.

In fact, the name DIYA is not at all overly specific and in fact the term OIL LAMP is so.

As mentioned in the original proposal, the DIYA is not just an “oil” lamp but it is:

filled with vegetable oil or clarified butter

In fact, modern-style non-spill diya-s sold as gift items even use wax such as in the following colourful set found immediately on searching for “wax diya” on Amazon.IN:



Further, our more important concern as the user community is that the term OIL LAMP in fact is associated more with the glass-metal type of mundane practical lamps. Thus creators and vendors of emoji glyphs/fonts are liable to choose that kind of glyph as most representative of the name OIL LAMP. This would entirely defeat the purpose of encoding the character which is intended to be used in traditional/festive/spiritual contexts, since the mundane lamp evokes no such feelings!

This can be seen from what a Google Images search for the term OIL LAMP turns out:



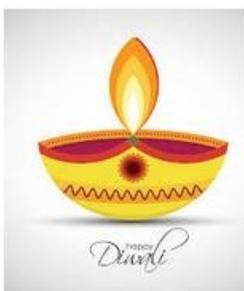
Of course, there is one real diya in there (row 2 column 2 or R2C2 from top-left) but we have two Aladdin-type lamps from the Middle-Eastern culture in the last two rows and the vast majority

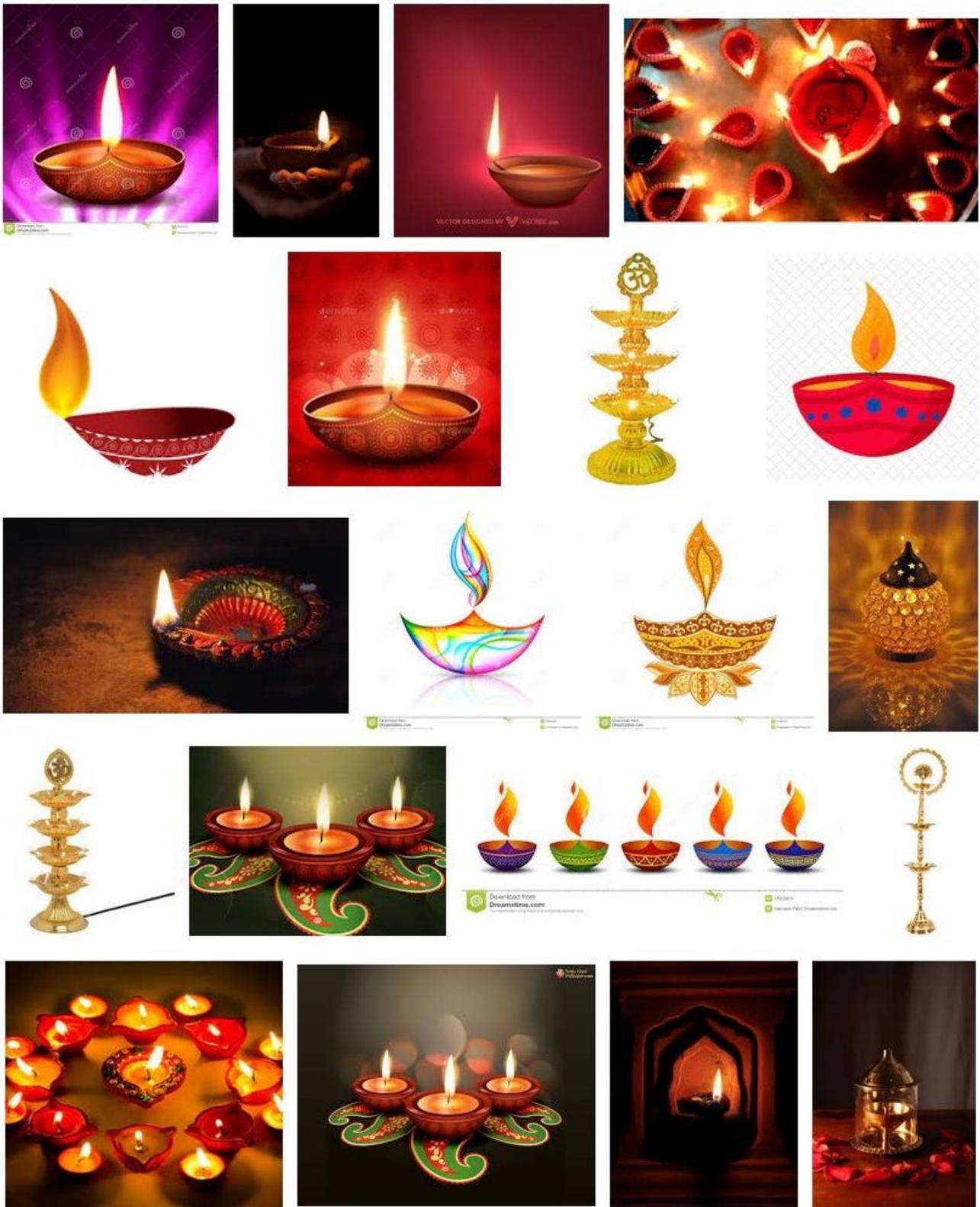
are cross-culture mundane practical lamps known as “kerosene lamps” here in (South) India and certainly not as DIYA-s! The [Wikipedia article on “kerosene”](#) provides the interesting insight that kerosene is in fact known as “lamp oil” which obviously leads “oil lamp” to refer to those lamps that use kerosene!

Scrolling down the images produced for OIL LAMP provides some slight limited consolation in that we have 5 diya-s out of 20, two ordinary Indian earthen (first two), one Roman (third one), one Indian Christian (R4C3 from top-left) and one unlit brass with stand (R2C1), but the majority still remains the practical glass-metal lamp:



In contrast, a similar search for the term DIYA produces all satisfactory results:





and we even have four metal items (one on R2C1 of the previous page and many on this), and even those with stands, one with decorative translucent body and cap (R3 last on this page), one with cap and glass to protect the flame from the wind (R5 last).

Thus it should be clear that the term DIYA is not overly specific.

In fact, the original proposal made a somewhat limited claim in saying that the DIYA:

is a small, round lamp made of fired clay

While indeed the small earthen lamp is what immediately comes to mind upon hearing the term DIYA, certainly those made of metal and having stands and various other decorations as seen before, hanging ones (below) and those with multiple wicks are also recognized as DIYA-s:



Nevertheless, the simple humble earthen DIYA picture:



... is entirely acceptable as representative of the whole DIYA family. In contrast, look at the following two, one of which is certain to be taken as representative of OIL LAMP as shown before:



These images certainly do not evoke the same kind of feelings, with or without a flame! As such, it would be entirely unacceptable to name a character intended for the DIYA as the OIL LAMP! No amount of annotations is going to guide emoji vendors to use the desired glyphs instead of the above if the character will be named OIL LAMP.

Further to be noted is that the term DIYA, while of Indian origin, is the only one able to denote the desired variety of lamps used in the desired contexts. That the usage of such lamps is not limited to Indian/Hindu-related contexts is clear from the following pictures from Russia and the Ukraine (apart from the Indian Christian lamp shown earlier):



I expect it would not be a problem to make a simple DIYA glyph acceptable to those cultures also. Of course, I can't speak for those cultures, but the point of this document is that a glyph showing a kerosene lamp would never be acceptable in any of these contexts.

Thus neither OIL LAMP, nor EARTHEN LAMP or CLAY LAMP or any such variations are acceptable alternate names for this character. While the term DIWALI LAMP certainly seems to be too specific as the usage of DIYA-s goes far beyond Diwali, I am not able to think of an acceptable alternative name to DIYA to signify the particular kind of lamp that is desired to be represented.

Thus I sincerely recommend retaining the name DIYA for this proposed character.

Sources for images:

1. Google Images searches for "Oil Lamp" and "Diya"
2. Amazon.IN search for "wax diya"
3. Wikipedia article on Oil Lamp:

https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Oil_lamp&oldid=818207354