

Feedback on request to change glyphs of Kannada Vocalic L/LL

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I reviewed L2/23-216 requesting to change the representative glyphs of Kannada Vocalic L/LL, which is a revision of their earlier document L2/17-041 to which I had objected in L2/17-160 noting insufficient attestations.

I now feel that the authors have now provided enough attestations for their requested glyph change. Special efforts have been taken to dig out the same from manuscripts etc especially related to grammar, and religious texts showing sacred varnamālā-s (“garland of letters” = alphabet), as these are more likely to have the authentic forms of these letters.

It is true that these letters are lesser known/used in the whole of the Samskrita language. As such even Kannada native users today are often not even aware of the Devanagari version of the vowel signs and simply use the *consonant* letter L vowelless below the base:

ಕ್ಲಪ್ತ instead of ಕ್ಲಪ್ತ

... in the few Samskrita contexts that use this vowel. Hence it is not unsurmisable that the actual native glyphs from much earlier were forgotten as well.

It is well known that there is an overarching influence of Devanagari across Bharat. It is hence possible that even before printing, the native Kannada glyphs might have declined in use in writing as well and the Devanagari glyphs used instead. Indeed, in my earlier document I had noted that two sources show the Devanagari-like forms (L2/17-160 p 2) and the glyphs here seem to be written and not printed. However they are from descriptions of the alphabet by non-native authors and hence certainly not as strong proof as actual manuscripts fully in the Kannada script.

It would seem that the present authors would like to give visibility to the actual native Kannada written forms by having them placed on the code chart since they write (on p 2):

Thus, it is requested that the glyphs given in this document which are original and unique to Kannada based on native texts like manuscripts and inscriptions be used for above four characters in the Code chart.

This is a cause which I can wholeheartedly support, as it will educate people regarding the actual old nature of the script which they have forgotten. The authors have further made a good argument that their proposed glyphs are indeed “representative” glyphs fit to be shown there.

Though personally I might have chosen the C variant of the long vowels (cf bottom of p 2) purely on aesthetic grounds, the authors mention in the paragraph above that “these are more common in records” to which I will defer. Their choice of variant 1 with the curly stem further helps disambiguate from the ೞ form of DEVANAGARI LETTER LA with the straight stem.

Hence I recommend that this proposal to use A1 and B1 as the representative glyphs be accepted and the alternate version of the long vowel C1 be noted in the Kannada chapter.