

# Proposal to encode Gurmukhi Letter Ssa

---

**Author:** Sukhjinder Sidhu (Punjabi Computing Resource Centre)



This proposal requests the encoding of GURMUKHI LETTER SSA at U+0A37. This code point allocation corresponds with the position given to the same letter in other ISCII-based Indic scripts.

## Introduction

Standard Gurmukhi (as taught in schools for the Punjabi language) has no unique letter to represent *śa* (श) or *ṣa* (ष). Instead, a nukta (referred to as a *pairīṁ bindī* in Punjabi), is used to differentiate between *sa* and *śa*:

ਸ [sa] + ੱ → ਸ [śa]

In colloquial use, if there is a need to represent a Sanskrit word that uses *ṣa*, ਸ is also often employed. This derives from the fact that Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu have all lost the distinction between *śa* and *ṣa*.

In more formal use, there is a definite need to represent *ṣa* distinctly. For example, when Sanskrit texts are written in Gurmukhi the distinction between *śa* and *ṣa* cannot be lost.

## Problem

Unfortunately, although attested use of the character exists (see the samples section), there is no uniform visual appearance.

For example, a copy of the Bhagvat Gita in Gurmukhi script uses ਸ with a large, heavy, secondary nukta to represent *ṣa*. On the other hand, the Mahan Kosh (a Sikh encyclopædia) represents the character with a glyph that is virtually identical to the Devanagari form but with a nukta to distinguish it as a non-standard Gurmukhi character.

## Solution

Regardless of the visual appearance of the character, there is a definite need for its encoding. It would be unwise to represent the character as a sequence of Sa + Nukta + Nukta because there is no precedent for double nuktas in Gurmukhi. In addition, this sequence is by no means a standard representation of the character.

Representing the character as a standalone code point is the preferred solution because *it is a distinct character!* The recommend visual form of the character is indicated at the top of this page. This is virtually identical to the form used in Mahan Kosh without the integrated Nukta.

Ultimately, if different publications wish to use different visual forms, they can achieve this by using an altered glyph for U+0A37.

## Samples

2.1 ਸ਼ਲੋਕ : ਸੰਜਯ ਓਵਾਚ : ਸਭ੍ਰਯ ਤਕਾਚ

तम् तथा कृपया आ-विष्टम्, अश्रु-पूर्ण-आकुल-ईक्षणम् । वि-सीदन्तम् इदम् वाक्यम्, उवाच मधु-सूदनः

ਤਮ੍ ਤਥਾ ਕ੍ਰਪਯਾ ਆ-ਵਿਸ਼ਟਮ੍ ਅਸ਼੍ਰੁਪੂਰ੍ਣ ਆਕੁਲ ਇਕਸ਼ਣਮ੍ ।  
ਵਿਸੀਦੰਤਮ੍ ਇਦਮ੍ ਵਾਕ੍ਯਮ੍ ਓਵਾਚ ਮਧੁ ਸੂਦਨਹ ॥

Chapter 2 of the Bhagvat Gita in Punjabi by Dr. Amar Komal. Showing the Gurmukhi form of the word ਆ-ਵਿਸ਼ਟਮ੍ *ā-viṣṭam*.

ਚਖ: ਸੰ. ਚਥ੍ ਚਥ੍ ਧਾ- ਖਾਣਾ (ਭੋਜਨ ਕਰਨਾ). "ਆਘਾਏ ਰਸ ਚਖਾ." (ਸਾਰ ਮਃ ੫) ੨. ਸੰ. ਚਥ੍ ਚਥ੍ ਧਾ- ਸਾਫ਼ ਬੋਲਣਾ, ਦੇਖਣਾ, ਚੂਸਣਾ। ੩. ਸੰ. ਚਥ੍ ਸੰਗਯਾ- ਨੇਤ੍ਰੁ. ਅੱਖ। ੪. ਫਾ. ਚਥ੍ ਜੰਗ. ਯੁੱਧ। ੫. ਸ਼ਤ੍ਰੁਤਾ. ਦੁਸ਼ਮਣੀ। ੬. ਯਤਨ. ਕੋਸ਼ਿਸ਼.

Page 1618 of the Mahan Kosh by Kahan Singh Nabha. Showing the Gurmukhi form of ਚਥ੍ *caṥ*.

ਤ੍ਰਖਿ: ਸੰ. ਨ੍ਰਥਿਤ- ਤ੍ਰਿਥਿਤ. ਵਿ- ਪਯਾਸਾ. "ਹਮ ਕਉ ਦ੍ਰਿਸਟਿ ਪਰੈ ਤ੍ਰਖਿ ਡਰਇਣਿ." (ਗੋਂਡ ਕਬੀਰ) ਸਾਨੂੰ ਲਹੂ ਦੀ ਪਯਾਸੀ ਡਾਕਿਨੀ ਨਜ਼ਰ ਆਉਂਦੀ ਹੈ.

Page 2134 of the Mahan Kosh by Kahan Singh Nabha. Showing the Gurmukhi form of ਨ੍ਰਥਿਤ *nr̥ṣita*.