

Placement of characters in Vedic, Devanagari, and Devanagari Extended blocks

Peter Scharf, editor

Contributors: Michael Slouber, Alessandro Graheli, Alessandro Passi, Whitney Cox,
Csaba Dezsó, Dominik Wujastyk, Jean-Luc Chevillard, and Veeranaraana.

The present document discusses criteria for the placement of characters recently proposed as additions to Devanāgarī, presents evidence for the non-Vedic use of certain of these additional characters, and introduces an additional character to be added to an extended Devanāgarī block. It contains three sections numbered in Roman numerals.

I. Criteria for character placement and discussion of evidence

The UTC South Asia Subcommittee on 12 May 2008 UTC accepted the following principles concerning the placement of characters:

1. The Devanāgarī block should be reserved for characters specific to Devanāgarī, in modern use, and not for transliteration. Conversely, characters that are not specific to Devanāgarī, not in modern use, or used solely for transliteration into Devanāgarī ought to be housed in an extension block.

2. A character shared across scripts and used in Vedic only, i.e. at least one script other than Devanāgarī, in texts termed Vedic in the narrow sense, belongs in the Vedic extension block. Examples include accent signs found in both Śāradā and Devanāgarī.

3. A character specific to Devanagari and either not in modern use or used only for transliteration of other scripts into Devanāgarī belongs in the Devanāgarī extension block. These may include characters that have parallel but differently shaped characters in other scripts. Examples include Sāmavedic superscript characters imitating alphanumeric characters and characters for extended nasals that include digit shapes. In a Vedic text in Bengali script one would find a Bengali 2, rather than a Devanāgarī 2, beneath a candrabindu.

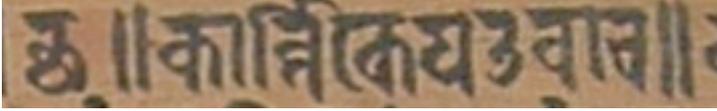
Below Alessandro Passi provides direct evidence of the character PUSHPIKAA in a Jaina manuscript thereby verifying that it is a Devanāgarī character that is not exclusively Vedic, by anyone's standards. Whitney Cox, Csaba Dezsó, Dominik Wujastyk, and Jean-Luc Chevillard provide references for additional corroborative evidence for its use in Jaina (non-Vedic) manuscripts. Michael Slouber, Alessandro Graheli, and Veeranaraana provide evidence of the use of the character in other religious, literary, and philosophical traditions that are non-Vedic in the narrower sense of the term as commonly used by scholars outside of India but included within the purview of the term 'Vedic' in the broader sense of the term as used to include literature produced in all Brāhmanical traditions.

The appearance of the character PUSHPIKAA in non-Vedic traditions implies that it is not properly housed in the Vedic extension block and justifies calling the additional block "Devanāgarī extended".

II. Evidence for the occurrence of the character DEVANAGARI PUSHPIKAA in non-Vedic Devanāgarī

Michael Slouber

Michael Slouber at the University of California at Berkeley reports having seen the PUSHPIKAA character in many manuscripts at section boundaries. He provided the following image of a Śaiva manuscript from Nepal dated 1178 AD.



Alessandro Graheli

Alessandro Graheli reports having seen the use of the cha-like filler in some Devanagari mss of the Bhaktirasaam.rtasindhu (1541 CE) by Ruupa Gosvaaaamin. He writes: I have a specimen dated 1711 CE, in which it is alternated with the character ;srii and in which it is written both with the horizontal bar and without it. I am still wondering about the significance of the character. I expect the character to have a propitiatory meaning, as in the case of ;srii, but do not know of any such significance of cha in Sanskrit. In this 1711 ms the group stha is written as scha (this is a feature common to many Devanagari documents of the same period), and in one Devanagari ms I have seen dha written as cha. Is it possible that this apparent cha stands for a tha or a dha (which unlike cha have some known "auspicious" significance)?

Alessandro Passi

Alessandro Passi at the Dipartimento Studi Linguistici e Orientali Università di Bologna provides evidence of the character in a Jaina manuscript. He writes, "It's the last letter on the second line of the incipit page. Very blurred (Jainanagari cha looks almost like Nagari ba). This text will be (hopefully) published within 2008, after innumerable setbacks! See also the transcript..."

Date 1650-1670 ca.
South Rajasthan



Whitney Cox

Whitney Cox at the University of Chicago writes:
As Peter Scharf's question was about non-Brahmanical MSS containing the sign õchaë, there are two indirect pieces of evidence of which I'm aware that might prove helpful.

Iěve come across the use of ōchaě in M. L. Nagarěs superb editions of Bilhaṇaěs Vikramāñkadevacarita (Princess of Wales Sarasvati Bhavan Series no. 82, 1945) and Someśvaraěs Vikramāñkābhyudaya (Gaekwaděs O.S. no. 150, 1966). Both of these are based on Rajasthani Jaina MSS. For the former, the base text used by Nagar (and the sole ms. used by Br̥hler in his editio princeps of 1875) is a nāgarī palm-leaf ms. from Jaisalmer dated (V.S.) 1343 or 1287 CE. It is given the siglum ōja.ě and described on p. 1 of Nagarěs prastāvanā (cf. Br̥hlerěs introduction, p. 45; I would be happy to supply these should the editions not be available). In his apparatus to the closing colophon of the textěs 18th sarga (p. 208), Nagar has the following note:

ōkṛtir vikramāñkābhīdhānaṃ samāptam | cha | evaṃ jātagraṃthāgraṃ 2545 iti ja.ě A quick look at the other sarga colophons hasn't turned up any other occurrences of ōchaě. I don't have any images of the manuscript or even any cataloguing information on it to hand; in fact I should be very grateful if anyone who might have suggestions about how to acquire MSS from Jaisalmer could contact with off-list, as I'm very eager to get digital photos of this early and important source.

The edition of Someśvara is based in a single ms., for which Nagar includes the following information (Intro., pp. vii-viii): ūIt existed [sic] only in a palm-leaf Ms. belonging to the famous manuscript collection deposited in the Sañghavī Pāḍā Jain Bhaṇḍār at Pāḍaṇ in Gujarāt. It belongs to the Laghupośālika branch of the Tapāgaccha. The work was first noticed by C.D. Dalal and is described on pages 85-86 of the Pāḍaṇ MS. Catalogue where it appears [sic] as No. 120 (A Descriptive Catalogue of Manuscripts in the Jain Bhaṇḍāras at Pattan, compiled from the notes of the Late. Mr. C. D. Dalal with introduction, indices, and appendices by Lalchandra Bhagwandas Gandhi, in two volumes, Vol 1: Palm-leaf Mss. Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1937.)

In the Vikramāñkābhyudaya, which is written mostly in gadya, the ōchaě (picked out by double daṇḍas on either side) is met with quite frequently. So there is a ōchaě closing off the initial description of the Karṇāḍa country (pp. 1-7), another one marking the end of the following verses (p. 9), another on p. 15 (following prose), p. 16 (verse), another on p. 22 (following the mixed padya-gadya description of Vikramāditya and his queen Vācalladevī, pp. 20-22), and still others on pp. 27, 43, 46, and 50 (the text breaks off on p. 55). Though the use does not appear entirely consistent, it seems that the ōchaě is here used to break off longish subsections of the text, either lengthy prose sentences or closing verses.

The western provenance of these sources leads me to wonder whether the ōchaě might have, at least initially, been meaningful. I am far from being an authority of such things, but it's my understanding that the verb ōto beě in Western languages like Rajasthani and Marwari is chai, chaiṃ, etc. Could this sign have originated in the west and then gradually became just a purely graphic convention?

Csaba Dezso

Csaba Dezso in the U.K. writes:

Both the Pāḍaṇ (Hemacandrācārya Jaina Jñānamandira ms 17472, paper) and the Pune (BORI ms 437 of 1892-95, paper) manuscripts of the Āgamaḍambara (both Jain nāgarī) use this sign at the end of the acts and as well as at the end of the play. You can find a description of these manuscripts here:

<http://www.claysanskritlibrary.org/extras.php> (Much Ado About Religion, Introduction)

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Dominik Wujastyk

Dominik Wujastyk, Visiting Associate Professor (Spring Semester '08), Department of Asian Studies, University of Texas at Austin, writes:
Working from memory, Chandrabhal Tripathi's wonderful catalogue of the Jain collections at Strasburg has a good general introduction to Sanskrit and Prakrit codicology, and I think he describes this sign. I also recall that it is called kalasha "pot" in scribal traditions.

Jean-Luc Chevillard

Jean-Luc Chevillard (CNRS, Paris) provides a reference for the use of cha in Jaina manuscripts. He writes:
Since nobody seems to have mentioned it, it might be useful to state here that in volume 1 of the "Catalogue of Jain Manuscripts of the British Library" (by Nalini Balbir, Kanhaiyalal V. Sheth, Kalpana K. Sheth and Candrabhal Bh. Tripathi) [The British Library & The Institute of Jainology, London, 2006] {ISBN 0 7123 4711 9} we find on p.16 (Abbreviations) the following mention:
"[x] the way to represent the cha, a symbol found at the end of manuscripts."

Veeranaraana

Veeranaraana confirms the common presence of the 'Cha'-like PUSHPIKAA character in his own inherited collection of Dvaita and Nyaya manuscripts from North Karnataka and confirms its significance to indicate the end of section/text/chapter etc. He writes that although it is common in manuscripts found in his region it is not so common in mss. found in other regions like Tamilnadu or Kerala. In the MS of Vyutpattivada, he is using for his critical edition given to him by one of his friends from the same region, the Cha occurs with such high frequency that every niranka patra (side of a leaf as it is called by them) has nearly two or three Chas to indicate the completion of debate on a particular subject.

III. Intentional gap character



Michael Slouber provides evidence of an additional character that we should propose for encoding and locate adjacent to the pushpikaa in the Devanāgarī extended block. He provides an image of a symbol from a Śaiva manuscript from Nepal dated 1178 AD and proposes that it signifies any intentional gap in the space ordinarily occupied by text. Unlike the horizontal line used for missing or illegible akṣaras, it signifies the opposite, namely, that the gap is intentional and should not be taken as a lacuna in the text.