Materials for a Proposal to encode the Devanāgarī headstroke in the BMP of the Unicode Standard

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A8FA  DEVANAGARI EMPTY HEADSTROKE

= shunya shirekhaa

The Devanāgarī empty headstroke is used in manuscripts copied from deteriorated originals to indicate small lacunae, that is, illegible gaps in the original due to obliteration of the text or destruction of the material on which it was written. As many headstrokes are used as orthographic syllables are estimated to have occupied the illegible space. Many Devanāgarī fonts include such a character, for example, Vedic font 224, which is used for input of the examples below. Figure 1 shows four examples, in lines 1, 4, 5, and 10 of the verso of folio 157 [Scharf photocopy p. 161 top] of the manuscript labelled by Macdonell (1886) as P1. The text, of which the manuscript is one of many witnesses, is Sadgurūsiya’s Vedārthadīpikā commentary on Rgveda 10.95 concerning the dialogue between Purūravas and Urvasī. The transcription of the examples in Devanāgarī (Vedic font), and Roman together with the corresponding text of Vijayapala’s (1985) edition of the text follow. In Roman, the DEVANAGARI EMPTY HEADSTROKE is represented by an underscore.

Note that I have surrounded the headstroke with spaces so that it is distinct from preceding and following characters and there are discrete headstrokes in sequence in examples 3-4, not simply a continuous headstroke. Manuscripts typically make the headstroke for each orthographic syllable (akṣara) as a separate unit. Modern printed and digital Devanāgarī runs the headstroke together in a continuous line. If we followed the general pattern of modern Devanāgarī, we’d run these empty headstrokes together. However, it seems to me it is essential to the character to be discrete and countable so that the reader knows how many missing characters are represented by counting the number of discrete headstrokes. Therefore, the headstroke character should be made short, i.e. non-joining when placed in sequence with itself or with any other character that has a headstroke included.

A proper graphic, character properties, etc. will be supplied by Michael Everson in N3488.

Example 1

Ms. P1, line 1 प्रामणं - ते। उमा सस्त्रीत्वस्य स्त्रीत्वकाले

prāptaśa_te. umā sastrītvasya strītvakāle

Vijayapala प्रामण्यमार्शकस्त्रीत्वकाले

prāptaśanmāršakstrītvakāle

Example 2

Ms. P1, line 4 स्वप्रासादे वरोऽहुः - सवितुमेच्छ्या वोदरसाम कृतवान्।

svaprāsāde varoddhum _sayitummechācchātrīdurāsām kṛtvān.

Vijayapala स्वप्रासादे वरोऽहुः वासवितुमेच्छ्या दुरासां कृतवान्।
svaprāsāde varoddhum vāsaiyutmicchan durāśāṁ kṛtavān.

Example 3

Ms. P1, line 5 प्रत्या -- षा -- कृतवति
pratyāḥaṃ kṛtavāti

Vijayapala प्रत्याचष्टे प्रत्याख्यानं कृतवति
pratyācaṣṭe pratyākhyaṇaṁ kṛtavāti

Example 4

Ms. P1, line 10 चलितोऽ च तदुकेः ज्ञृ कुम्भे निहित -- -- कौ
calitau ca tadukte jyū kumbhe nihita _ kau

Vijayapala चलितितो तत्त्वेऽति कुम्भे निहित शुक्रकोऽ
calacittau tataścaitau kumbhe nihita śukrakau.

Figure 1

A manuscript page of Śaḍguruṇiṣya’s Vedārthadipikā showing the DEVANAGARI EMPTY HEADSTROKE.

Bibliography
