

## Request for normative aliases for some generic Indic characters

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This document is with regard to the following characters intended for generic Indic usage but encoded in the Devanagari block:

- 0964 Devanagari Danda
- 0965 Devanagari Double Danda
- 0951 Devanagari Stress Sign Udatta
- 0952 Devanagari Stress Sign Anudatta

### *The recurring problem of the generic Indic danda-s*

It is well known to anyone acquainted with Indic issues in Unicode that the issue of the danda-s has been a recurring problem. Recently, L2/09-141R, a proposal for encoding the Grantha script, stated that “justification exists for providing Grantha-specific danda signs in Unicode encoding” because “danda signs are not a recent borrowal from Devanagari signs as Indologists affirm the ... existence of danda signs in Grantha script in ancient palm-leaf manuscripts”.

Obviously, these statements of the author of that document are based on his misconstruing the intent of the P&P document N3452. However, they serve to underline the need for further clarification of the fact that the so-called ‘Devanagari’ danda-s are in fact intended for generic Indic use.

Granted, the Unicode code charts currently do clarify this by the following text in the name chart of the Devanagari block:

### **Generic punctuation for scripts of India**

These punctuation marks are for common use of the scripts of India  
despite being named “Devanagari”.

Apparently this is still insufficient! While there is no infallible medicine to cure misunderstanding, I feel that it may further help curbing the meaningless requests for danda disunification if these characters are given the following normative aliases:

- 0964 Devanagari Danda
  - ※ Indic Danda
- 0965 Devanagari Double Danda
  - ※ Indic Double Danda

This would enable one to refer to these characters as 0964 Indic Danda and 0965 Indic Double Danda without using the word “Devanagari”.

### *Similar aliases for the Vedic Svvara markers*

On a similar argument as above, the following normative aliases should be added as well:

- 0951 Devanagari Stress Sign Udatta
  - ※ Vedic Tone Svarita
- 0952 Devanagari Stress Sign Anudatta
  - ※ Vedic Tone Anudatta

It should be noted that these alternative names already exist as informative aliases and this is hence merely a request for them to be ‘promoted’ to normative status. The existing name for 0951 is also highly misleading as this character is actually mostly used for the svarita, creating all the more need for an alias.

### *Arguments against adding aliases*

It may be argued that these aliases offer little technical benefit and that they are only useful to add psychological ‘acceptability’ of the names of these characters. Adding such aliases might prompt others to ask for further normative aliases without there being a compelling need to do so. The Unicode Standard 5.0 page 566 (chapter 17.1) also says “Characters are given normative character name aliases in certain cases where there is a defect in the character name.” None of the four characters above have demonstrated a particular defect in the character name, and hence they should not get normative aliases.

### *Arguments for adding aliases*

It is accepted that the main intent of this request is to improve the psychological ‘acceptability’ of the names of these characters for their intended pan-Indic use. However, I feel that that is not a valid reason for rejection, given precedent.

FE18 was given a normative alias for correcting the small spelling mistake of spelling ‘bracket’ as ‘brakcet’. Anybody who knows English and reads the spelling ‘brakcet’ will obviously identify it as a spelling mistake. I do not see any possible reason for adding an alias 61 letters long to correct an incorrect swapping of 2 letters other than for the sake of acceptability. There is also obviously no ‘technical’ benefit in adding this alias.

Further, OCDE was given the alias Kannada Letter LLLA only for catering to the requirement for a character name to properly reflect its intended usage as far as possible. The same may be said to be true here, since “Indic” and “Vedic” are the terms which properly reflect the pan-Indic usage of the characters rather than the adjective “Devanagari” which suggests that they are used only in Devanagari.

It also cannot be said that adding these aliases would lead to requests for other unnecessary aliases such as Halant, Hasant and Pulli instead of Virama, since we are asking for more general names here which can only converge, not divergent more specific names.

Thus these aliases should be provided alongwith explanatory annotations.

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