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Title: Comments on India’s Proposal to Add Devanagari Characters for Kashmiri (N3710 L2/09-369)
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1 Introduction

The Indian National Body recently proposed the encoding of additional characters for Devanagari, which are used in writing the Kashmiri language. The document “Proposal to add Six characters in the Devanagari block for representation of Kashmiri language in Devanagari script” (N3710 L2/09-369) shows a total of ten characters, four of which were previously proposed by Michael Everson and Pravin Satpute in “Proposal to add four characters for Kashmiri to the BMP” (N3480 L2/08-250). The ten characters are:

अ DEVANAGARI VOWEL HIGH CENTRAL UNROUNDED U
अ DEVANAGARI VOWEL HIGH CENTRAL UNROUNDED UU
ॠ DEVANAGARI VOWEL SIGN HIGH CENTRAL UNROUNDED U
ॠ DEVANAGARI VOWEL SIGN HIGH CENTRAL UNROUNDED UU
अ DEVANAGARI VOWEL MID CENTRAL UNROUNDED O
आ DEVANAGARI VOWEL MID CENTRAL UNROUNDED OO
ॠ DEVANAGARI VOWEL SIGN MID CENTRAL UNROUNDED O
आ DEVANAGARI VOWEL SIGN MID CENTRAL UNROUNDED OO
औ DEVANAGARI VOWEL BACK LOW ROUNDED O
औ DEVANAGARI VOWEL SIGN BACK LOW ROUNDED O

2 Analysis

The four characters proposed by Everson and Satpute – अ, अ, ॠ, and ॠ – are used exclusively in Kashmiri. The six additional characters proposed by the Indian National Body are not exclusive to Kashmiri. These vowel letters and their accompanying signs are used in languages such as Bhojpuri, Magahi, and Maithili.

In fact, the present author has already discussed some of these characters in the document “Proposal to Encode Additional Short Vowel Characters for Devanagari” (L2/09-320). In L2/09-320, the characters औ DEVANAGARI LETTER SHORT AU and औ DEVANAGARI VOWEL SIGN SHORT AU are proposed as additions to Devanagari. These are identical to the Indian National Body’s DEVANAGARI VOWEL BACK LOW ROUNDED O and DEVANAGARI VOWEL SIGN BACK LOW ROUNDED O.

Moreover, the Indian National Body’s अ DEVANAGARI VOWEL MID CENTRAL UNROUNDED O and आ DEVANAGARI VOWEL MID CENTRAL UNROUNDED OO and their respective vowel signs should not be considered atomic characters. As is discussed in L2/09-320, the character आ was used in the orthography for Bhojpuri to denote an extra short form of अ U+0905 DEVANAGARI LETTER A. It was determined that this character can be

represented using ◌̇ U+0951 DEVANAGARI STRESS SIGN UDATTA, eg. अ̇ U+0906 DEVANAGARI LETTER AA + ◌̇ U+0951 DEVANAGARI STRESS SIGN UDATTA = अ̇. The same representation could be potentially used for the characters proposed by the Indian National Body.

Lastly, the character names assigned by the Indian National Body do not conform to the naming convention used for Indic scripts in the Universal Character Set. Compare the names assigned by Everson and Satpute to those of the Indian National Body:

	Everson & Satpute	Indian National Body
अ̇	DEVANAGARI LETTER UE	DEVANAGARI VOWEL HIGH CENTRAL UNROUNDED U
अ̇̄	DEVANAGARI LETTER UUE	DEVANAGARI VOWEL HIGH CENTRAL UNROUNDED UU
◌̇̄	DEVANAGARI VOWEL SIGN UE	DEVANAGARI VOWEL SIGN HIGH CENTRAL UNROUNDED U
◌̇̄̄	DEVANAGARI VOWEL SIGN UUE	DEVANAGARI VOWEL SIGN HIGH CENTRAL UNROUNDED UU

The names recommended by the Indian National Body are certainly articulatory descriptions of the Kashmiri vowels represented by the proposed characters, but they do not adhere to the naming conventions used for Devanagari. For instance, the character क̇ is an unvoiced velar stop, but it is named DEVANAGARI LETTER KA, not DEVANAGARI CONSONANT VOICELESS VELAR PLOSIVE, as it might according to the naming convention used by the Indian National Body for its Kashmiri additions.

3 Recommendations

It is strongly recommended that no action be taken on the Indian National Body's "Proposal to add Six characters in the Devanagari block for representation of Kashmiri language in Devanagari script" (N3710 L2/09-369). The proposal to add characters for representing Kashmiri in Devanagari should be examined in tandem with the characters proposed in L2/09-320. Given that several of the characters proposed by the Indian National Body are used to write languages other than Kashmiri, an encoding of such corresponding characters in Devanagari should accommodate their use in all orthographies that require them.