

**Letters LLLA and NNNA in Grantha block – Reference documents from experts and users -  
Comment on 12-039**

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**Epigraphists' view on the necessity of including LLLA and NNNA in Grantha block:**

Several senior epigraphists and scholars of the archaic and liturgical Grantha script have requested for the inclusion of letters, NNNA and LLLA in Grantha block in the Unicode Standard to be able to write names and words of Dravidian languages (Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Tulu) properly following the Unicode encoding principles that have been implemented in neighboring scripts of Grantha, for example Grantha SHA (U+0BB6) in Tamil block or the decision taken in just the last UTC meeting, to include the Grantha II vowel in Malayalam Dravidian block. The neighboring Brahmic scripts themselves derive from Grantha. Eminent Indologists like Asko Parpola themselves have given examples of Dravidian letters inside Rgveda itself (the oldest available Indo-European text in the World) when the Veda is written in Grantha. Dr. K. G. Krishnan, an eminent authority on Grantha has shown that Tamil text in its entirety is written in Grantha in 13<sup>th</sup> century itself. Prof. John Marr (University of London) has published holy hymns of Tamil (Tevaram of Saiva religion, 4000 Prabandham of Vaishnava religion) written in Grantha script in Thailand. And, recently Thailand royal committee has made requests for sacred texts of Tamil written in Grantha script to be published by major Madras publishers both in print and in the web. Important reference documents from senior epigraphists and linguists asking for encoding Dravidian letters in Grantha script block are:

- (1) Dr. R. Nagaswamy, Founder-Director, Department of Archaeology and Epigraphy, , Govt. of Tamil Nadu and one of the foremost scholars of Grantha and Tamil (L2/11-025).
- (2) Dr. S. Rasu, Professor and Head, Dept. of Epigraphy, Tamil University, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu (L2/11-024).
- (3) Dr. E. Annamalai, Professor of Tamil and Linguistics, University of Chicago (L2/11-006).

Since both letters, NNNA and LLLA come inside Grantha script, they are needed in Grantha. Also, the Grantha lettet, NNNA, has a unique Chillu form which can only be provided from Grantha block, for example, either a chillu marker or a ZWJ joiner.

Take the case of the last UTC decision to include archaic Grantha letter, (vowel II) inside the Malayalam block. Once this form of Grantha II is seen in Malayalam script (a book by Herman Gundert in 19<sup>th</sup> century), UTC has recommended its inclusion inside Malayalam block. This is a

parallel situation for Dravidian letters, LLLA and NNNA which are part of the Grantha script to write Dravidian languages such as Malayalam and Tamil. Dravidian languages have been written in Grantha script for centuries not only in South India but also in Cambodia and Thailand.

**Request from Major Publisher from Chennai, India to have Grantha font to show Tevaram, holy hymns of Tamils:** Based on a request from the Royal committee in Thailand, Kaanthalakam, Madras publishers, want to put the Tamil holy hymns (some 40,000 pages in <http://thevaaram.org> in Grantha script, this original script has been considered sacred and is used for transcribing holy texts from Dravidian languages (such as Tamil and Malayalam) for centuries. In Thailand there is a seven centuries old tradition of writing Tamil sacred songs and their commentaries in Grantha script. Based on the Royal priests' committee request from Thailand, Madras publishers want to print publications and place their 40,000 page Website of Tamil texts in Grantha script. Their request signed by the chairman, Sri. K. Sachithanathan, Chennai, to UTC is recorded in the document, L2/12-054.

As this is the easiest and simplest Technical solution to write Dravidian words in Grantha, following the method of encoding characters in many Indic scripts across the years in The Unicode Standard – the most recent one being Grantha vowel II in Malayalam block - scholars of Grantha epigraphy request the addition of the characters, LLLA and NNNA, inside the Grantha block in SMP.