GONDI and GUNJALA GONDI CHARACTER NAMES – Vowels EE and OO

Comment on GONDI (L2/15-005) and GUNJALA GONDI (L2/15-086) proposals

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Abstract: This document requests naming of two vowels in the Unicode Standard from Gondi script proposals, L2/15-005 and L2/15-086 along the lines of South India's scripts. Gondi being a language belonging to Dravidian family (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dravidian_languages) it is requested to name the vowels, EE and OO, like what is done in The Unicode Standard with Character Names in Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam, the four major literary languages of Dravidian family with scripts going back to 2000 years.

1.0 Gondi Proposal

 Like 5 scripts (Tamil, Malayalam, Grantha, Telugu. Kannada), Gondi and Gunjala Gondi will be two new scripts able to write a Dravidian language, the tribal Gondi language. In the last few decades, these two scripts under development for Gondi language, both of which now have been proposed to be encoded in The Unicode Standard. There have been some attempts to introduce literacy using these scripts among Gondi folks, though majority of them have to study either Telugu or Devanagari script whichever is dominant in their State of residence in India when they enter Government schools. The proposals to encode Gondi and Gunjala Gondi scripts are:

(1) http://www.unicode.org/L2/L2015/15005-gondi.pdf
(2) http://www.unicode.org/L2/L2015/15086-gunjala-gondi.pdf

It is great that Gondi tribe's leaders & elders are devising scripts – one based on Brahmi and the other based on Modi script. A school to bring literacy to Gondi children,

http://www.ucanews.com/news/indias-gonds-struggle-to-preserve-their-mother-tongue/72748

These people obviously are not aware of how the Dravidian long vowels, EE and OO are given character names and their code points in the Unicode Standard for parallel Dravidian languages such as Telugu, Tamil, Kannda, Malayalam etc., In L2/15-005, when compared to Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Grantha & Sourashtra scripts, the long & short vowels' positions in code points are switched.

Table 1.1. Gondi Proposal (L2/15-005) and Change Request for Character Names
(following the convention of South Indian scripts in The Unicode Standard)

Character in L2/15-005	Code Point in L2/15-005	Proposed Character Names	Proposed Code Point
Gondi Letter E	U+11B96	Gondi Letter EE	U+11B97
Gondi Letter O	U+11B99	Gondi Letter OO	U+11B9A

Keep the spaces for Gondi short vowels, E & O which are U+11B96 & U+11B99 as <reserved> for Gondi Letters E and O. The naming request in Table 1.1 is explained using the corresponding Character Names and Code Points in the other South Indian scripts in Table 1.2 shown below.

Table 1.2. Proposed Changes in Character Names and Code Points in Gondi (L2/15-005) and their corresponding Characters in South Indian scripts in the Unicode Standard.

Character Name requested	Character Code Point	Tamil	Telugu	Kannada	Malayalam	Grantha
<reserved> for Gondi Letter E	<U+11B96>	0B8E	0C0E	0C8E	0D0E	<1130E>
Gondi Letter EE	U+11B97	0B8F	0C0F	0C8F	0D0F	1130F
<reserved> for Gondi Letter O	<U+11B99>	0B92	0C12	0C92	0D12	<11312>
Gondi Letter OO	U+11B9A	0B93	0C13	0C93	0D13	11313

2.0 Gunjala Gondi Proposal

Following the change request of vowel character names to EE and OO, to maintain consistency between the two Gondi script encodings and all the other 5 South Indian scripts (Ref. Table 1.2), Table 2.1 shows the request for change in Gunjala Gondi vowel names to EE and OO as well.

Table 2.1. Proposed Changes in Character Names and Code Points in Gunjala Gondi (L2/15-086) and their corresponding Characters in South Indian scripts in the Unicode Standard.

Character Name requested	Character Code Point	Tamil	Telugu	Kannada	Malayalam	Grantha
<reserved> for Gunjala Gondi Letter E	<U+11DB6>	0B8E	0C0E	0C8E	0D0E	<1130E>
Gunjala Gondi Letter EE	U+11DB7	0B8F	0C0F	0C8F	0D0F	1130F
Gunjala Gondi Letter AI	U+11DB8	0B90	0C10	0C90	0D10	11310
<reserved> for Gunjala Gondi Letter O	<U+11DB9>	0B92	0C12	0C92	0D12	<11312>
Gunjala Gondi Letter OO	U+11DBA	0B93	0C13	0C93	0D13	11313

Please note that the short vowels E and O are not proposed here for Gunjala Gondi. All Dravidian languages have the vowels short vowels E and O as phonemes. Gondi people can add these phonemes later if they want. It is requested to keep two reserved spaces for E and O in L2/15-086 in parallel with L2/15-005. Of course, adding the two reserved spots will push all the subsequent characters of Gunjala Gondi two code points forward.

3.0 Short Vowels E and O in Gondi – Parallels from South Indian scripts

L2/15-005, pp 8 and 9, Section 3.13 shows the diacritic mark for short vowels E and O borrowed from Devanagari script which is also a recent invention to mark the Dravidian short vowels E and O in Devanagari.

There are well known precedents to the way Gondi scholars are developing their Gondi script to write the inherent short vowel E and O phonemes in their Dravidian language. Tamil script, about 18 centuries ago, while developing from the Brahmi script introduced the Virama diacritic sign to mark short E and O. Only a century ago, instead of the Virama (Pulli), a new circle was added in EE and OO vowels and vowel signs. Hence in the Grantha script, experts recommend using Virama (Pulli) for short E and O. Elmar Kniprath's Grantha font employs the same technique in both Vattezuttu and Grantha fonts. Epigraphy specialists such as Dr. R. Nagaswamy, Director (Retd.), Dept. of Archaeology, Madras and Prof. S. Rasu, Head, Epigraphy do recommend the same procedure. The following suggestion is done by Sriramana Sharma in his L2/09-372 proposal.

Examples of transliterating Kannada and Telugu names of towns and villages using these new characters are given below:

ఎడ్లపాడు ಎಡ್ಲುಪೊಾಾಬಾ ఒంగోలు ఒಂಗೊಾಲಾ

ఆగుంబె ಸ್ಾಗುಾಂಗಿಬ ಹೊಸನಗರ ಹೊಾಸುನಗರ

Of course, words from Indian English with short E would also be transcribed in this way.

This is done in Brahmi script encoding in the Unicode Standard. "PuLLi takes the form of a dot above or in the upper part of the akSara. In addition to this normal virama function, puLLi is also used with the vowels e and o in order to mark them as short: in contrast to Sanskrit and most Middle-Indo-Aryan dialects, the Dravidian languages have short as well as long e and o phonemes." In the Brahmi encoding, puLLi function and its shape "dot" to reduce long /e/ and /o/ to short vowels is allowed in Unicode (S. Baums and A. Glass, L2/07-342, pg. 8, L2/07-342).

For the Vattezuttu script working from Tamil block, the Virama sign is added to create short E and O vowels by Elmar Kniprath in http://www.aai.uni-hamburg.de/indtib/vatteluttu.html

For the Vattezhuttu script, see the Virama diacritic added to indicate short E and O vowels in the Table shown in the next page. All this information is provided just to demonstrate that Gondi script is on the right tract to show the short E and O vowels unambiguously differentiating from the long EE and OO vowels.

Vowel ligatures

	a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	e	ē	ai	o	ō
k											
ṅ											
c											
ñ											
ṭ											
ṇ											
t											
n											
p											
m											
y											
r											
l											
v											
ḷ											
ḻ											
ṟ											
ṉ											

Summary: Because the shown character naming pattern is maintained in all 6 South Indian scripts, the Dravidian language Gondi's 2 scripts is requested to follow the same & EE and OO in the vowels' Unicode Character Names.