

Doc Type: Working Group Document
Title: Comments on India’s Proposal to Add Devanagari Characters for Kashmiri (N3710 L2/09-369)
Source: Anshuman Pandey (pandey@umich.edu)
Status: Individual Contribution
Action: For consideration by UTC
Date: 2009-10-26

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
 ॠ DEVANAGARI VOWEL HIGH CENTRAL UNROUNDED UU
 ॡ DEVANAGARI VOWEL SIGN HIGH CENTRAL UNROUNDED U
 ॢ DEVANAGARI VOWEL SIGN HIGH CENTRAL UNROUNDED UU
 ॣ DEVANAGARI VOWEL MID CENTRAL UNROUNDED O
 । DEVANAGARI VOWEL MID CENTRAL UNROUNDED OO
 ॥ DEVANAGARI VOWEL SIGN MID CENTRAL UNROUNDED O
 ० DEVANAGARI VOWEL SIGN MID CENTRAL UNROUNDED OO
 ॠ DEVANAGARI VOWEL BACK LOW ROUNDED O
 ॡ DEVANAGARI VOWEL SIGN BACK LOW ROUNDED O

2 Analysis

The four characters proposed by Everson and Satpute – अ, ॠ, ॡ, and ॢ – 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 these characters in the document “Proposal to Encode Additional Short Vowel Characters for Devanagari” (L2/09-320). In L2/09-320, the Indian National Body’s ॠ DEVANAGARI VOWEL BACK LOW ROUNDED O is proposed for encoding as DEVANAGARI LETTER SHORT O and ॡ DEVANAGARI VOWEL SIGN BACK LOW ROUNDED O is proposed as DEVANAGARI VOWEL SIGN SHORT O.

Moreover, the Indian National Body’s ॣ DEVANAGARI VOWEL MID CENTRAL UNROUNDED O and । DEVANAGARI VOWEL MID CENTRAL UNROUNDED OO and accompanying vowel signs should not be considered atomic characters, as is discussed in L2/09-320 regarding the unproposed character ॥ DEVANAGARI LETTER EXTRA SHORT A. The Indian National Body’s character and the EXTRA SHORT A can be produced using ॥ U+0951

DEVANAGARI STRESS SIGN UDATTA, eg. अँ U+0906 DEVANAGARI LETTER AA + ◌ँ U+0951 DEVANAGARI STRESS SIGN UDATTA = अँ.

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
अँ	DEVANAGARI LETTER UE	DEVANAGARI VOWEL HIGH CENTRAL UNROUNDED U
अँँ	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. The character क़ is a voiceless velar stop, but it is named DEVANAGARI LETTER KA, not DEVANAGARI CONSONANT VOICELESS VELAR PLOSIVE, as it would according to the naming convention assigned for the 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 "Proposal to Encode Additional Short Vowel Characters for Devanagari" (L2/09-320) in order to proceed in a manner that accommodates the orthographies of multiple languages that use corresponding characters in Devanagari.