

Introducing the Amaragannada scripts

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1 Introduction

This document provides brief description on group of scripts collectively known as Amaragannada (ಅಮರಗನ್ನಡ *Amaragannaḍa*). It was developed in 15th century CE to write the religious Literature of Kodekal Basavanna. These are constructed scripts based on Brahmi model. The objective is to bring them to the attention of the Unicode Technical Committee and to seek advice regarding the encoding of these scripts. An encoding of these scripts will help in documenting and digitizing the manuscripts of Amaragannada. Additional research is required to identify total number of existing scripts and a formal proposal is forthcoming.

2 Background

Kodekal is a village located in the Yadgir district of Karnataka. These scripts were invented to preserve religious texts from destruction during Islamic invasion and rule. Kodekal Basavanna was born in 15th century CE and belonged to Ārūḍha tradition. These scripts were known only to Kodekal Basavanna and their followers. Hence it was known as secret script or *Gupta/Rahasya lipi*. According to their tradition Kodekal is also called as Amarakalyāṇa and script is called as Amaragannada where *Amara* refers to immortal in Kannada language.

It is believed that a person named Ārūḍha Saṅgamēśvara gave Ēkādaśī lipipatra containing the alphabet of eleven scripts to Kodekal Basavanna. The work *Gurubodhe* of Kodekal Literature mentions the existence of eleven Amaragannada scripts as given below:

ಹನ್ನೊಂದಮರಗನ್ನಡ ಲಿಪಿ
ಉನ್ನತುತ್ತರ ಉಭಯಕಾಲದಿ
ನಮ್ಮನರಿತವರಿಲ್ಲವಯ್ಯ ಬಸವ ಕೇಳಿಂದ

Hannondamaragannaḍa lipi
unnatuttara ubhayakāladi
nammanaritavarillavayya basava kēḷenda

Some of the alphabets were developed to resemble the shapes of Persian alphabet (see Type 2) to conceal the identity of Kodekal literature and protect from Islamic rulers from destruction. Details regarding the origin of scripts are not known. All these scripts adhere to common structure and orthography and differ in character shapes.

3 Language and Literature

Kannada is the major language used and a large number of manuscripts are available in these scripts. The literature of Kodekal Basavanna available in these scripts includes Kārajñāna, Khaṇḍajñāna, Nītijñāna and Bōdhajñāna. Apart from the works Kodekal Basavanna we find literature of his followers & descendants and vachanas of 12th century Sharanas.

4 Geography

Amaragannada scripts were primarily used in the Yadgir, Kalaburagi, Vijayapura, Bagalkot and Raichur districts of North Karnataka and Solapur district, Maharashtra.

5 Current Situation

The scripts are not actively used presently. There are very few scholars who have expertise on these scripts. In recent years some workshops were conducted on Amaragannada by National mission for manuscripts at Department of Manuscriptology, Kannada University, Hampi.¹

6 Script Details

6.1 Structure of the scripts

Amaragannada scripts are abugida which are written from left to right. These are based upon the Brahmi model and created scripts which are not genetically related to other scripts. Consonant letters possess the inherent vowel a. Consonant clusters are represented as conjuncts. Vowel signs are used to represent consonant vowels.

6.2 Structure of the characters

In general an Amaragannada letter consists of a frame and a nucleus that represents a distinctive phoneme. The frames like , , , , , ,  are commonly used. For example in one script GA is written as  consisting of **x** as the nucleus and  as frame. In Amaragannada the letter is encoded as single unit not as a combination of the frame and the nucleus. Some scripts only differ in frames like ,  in place of  having same nucleus. They may be considered as variants.

¹ <http://www.namami.gov.in/basic>

6.3 Vowels A is the only vowel used. Rest are represented by the letters that closer to pronunciation of respective vowels. The vowels I, II, U, UU, E, O are written as yi, yī, vu, vū, ye, vo and so on. AI and AU are also written as ay and av respectively. Vocalic R is written as ru.

6.4 Vowel signs

Dependent vowel signs are used. The shapes are derived from either Kannada or Devanagari vowel signs. All scripts share same set of Vowel signs. The following vowel signs are used:

AA		E	
I		EE	
II		O	
U		OO	
UU		AU	
VOCALIC R			

A distinct character for vowel sign AI inspired from Kannada script may also exist.

6.5 Virama

There is no halanta for suppressing the inherent vowel. A new virama character can be introduced as a control character that is used for producing consonant clusters.

6.6 Consonant clusters

In Amaragannada the consonant clusters are written similar to Kannada known as *Ottakshara*. Consonant clusters are most commonly represented by a subscripted, and often transformed, consonant glyph for the second element of the cluster. The *repha/arkavottu*  and Post-Base *ra-vottu*  are borrowed from Kannada script.

6.7 Signs

Signs for ANUSVARA  and VISARGA  are attested.

6.8 Digits

Distinct digits are not attested in Amaragannada. Kannada digits (U+0CE6-U+0CEF) are commonly used.

6.9 Punctuation

ꣳ Danda and ꣳꣳ Double Danda are commonly attested. The shapes are distinct from ꣳ U+0964 DEVANAGARI DANDA and ꣳꣳ U+0965 DEVANAGARI DOUBLE DANDA. These signs are also sometimes attested in Kannada inscriptions.

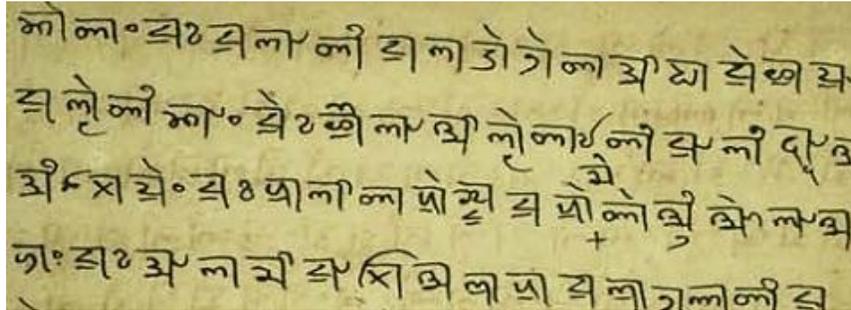
7 Other Details

7.1 Allocation

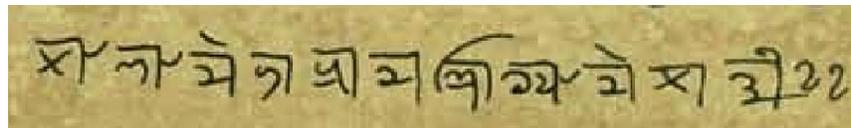
So far we have identified six-seven distinct scripts. It appears all eleven distinct scripts exist. Additional research is required to identify character repertoire and finding number of scripts presently available. Each distinctly identified script should be separately encoded. The names Amaragannada A, Amaragannada B etc. may be used to recognize the scripts. As of now it is requested to tentatively allocate four columns each for at least six scripts in the Roadmap to the SMP.

7.2 Sample representations of different scripts

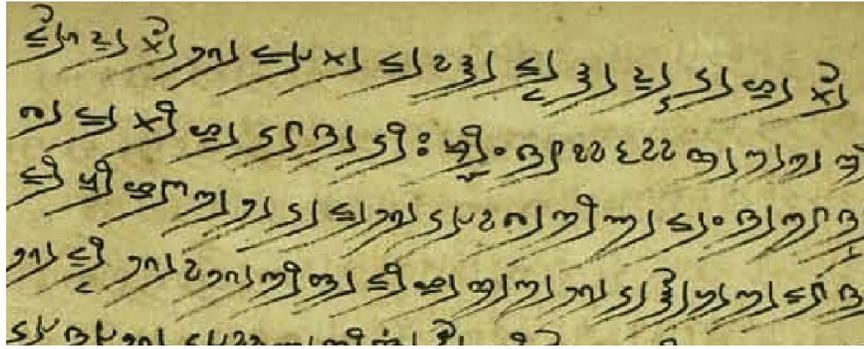
Type 1:



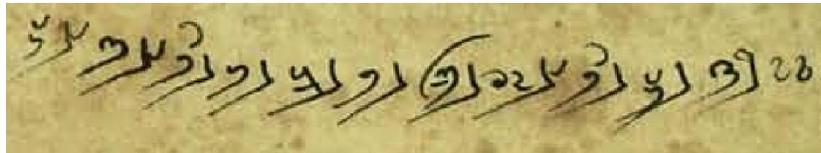
The folio given below transliterates as guruve basavaprabhuve gati.



Type 2:

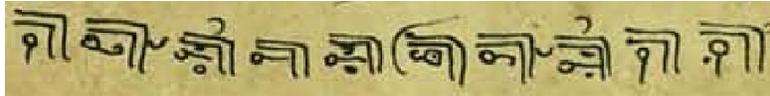


The folio given below transliterates as guruve basavaprabhuve gati.

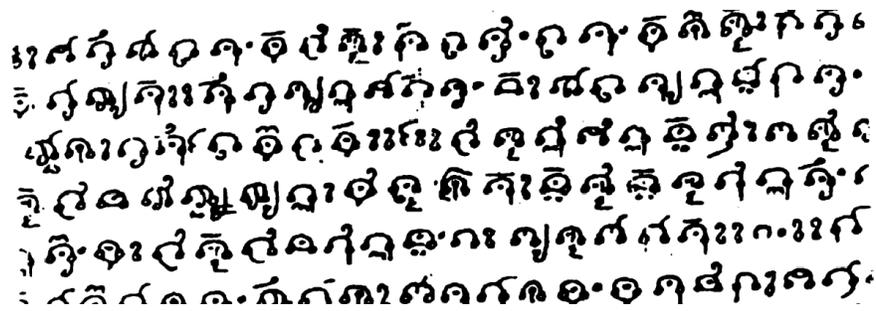


Type 3 :

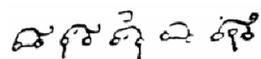
The folio reads as guruve bavaprabhuve gati.



Type 4:



This excerpt given below reads as guruve gati



8 References

Reddy, Devarakonda. *Lipiya huṭṭu mattu beḷavaṇige*. Kannada Pustaka Pradhikara, Bengaluru. 2002.

Soppimatha, B.A. *Koḍēkalla basavaṇṇa: ondu adhyayana*. Karnatak University, Dharwad. 1988²

² <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/99971>

Handwritten text in a script, likely a form of Arabic or Persian, on a page with a decorative border. The text is arranged in approximately 10 horizontal lines. A small marginal mark is visible on the right side.

Handwritten text in a script, likely a form of Arabic or Persian, on a page with a decorative border. The text is arranged in approximately 10 horizontal lines. A small marginal mark is visible on the right side.

Figure 2. The folios from the same manuscript in another script.

ಅಮರಗನ್ನಡದ ಕೈಗಳು

	ಗನೆಯ ಕೈಯ	ಫನೆಯ ಕೈಯ								
ಅ	ಅ	ಆ	ಇ	ಊ	ಋ	ಌ	಍	ಏ	ಓ	ಔ
ಆ	ಆ	ಇ	ಊ	ಋ	ಌ	಍	ಏ	ಓ	ಔ	ಋ
ಇ	ಇ	ಊ	ಋ	ಌ	಍	ಏ	ಓ	ಔ	ಋ	ಌ
ಊ	ಊ	ಋ	ಌ	಍	ಏ	ಓ	ಔ	ಋ	ಌ	಍
ಋ	ಋ	ಌ	಍	ಏ	ಓ	ಔ	ಋ	ಌ	಍	ಏ
ಌ	ಌ	಍	ಏ	ಓ	ಔ	ಋ	ಌ	಍	ಏ	ಓ
಍	಍	ಏ	ಓ	ಔ	ಋ	ಌ	಍	ಏ	ಓ	ಔ
ಏ	ಏ	ಓ	ಔ	ಋ	ಌ	಍	ಏ	ಓ	ಔ	ಋ
ಓ	ಓ	ಔ	ಋ	ಌ	಍	ಏ	ಓ	ಔ	ಋ	ಌ
ಔ	ಔ	ಋ	ಌ	಍	ಏ	ಓ	ಔ	ಋ	ಌ	಍
ಕ	ಕ	ಖ	ಗ	ಘ	ಙ	ಚ	ಛ	ಜ	ಝ	ಞ
ಖ	ಖ	ಗ	ಘ	ಙ	ಚ	ಛ	ಜ	ಝ	ಞ	ತ
ಗ	ಗ	ಘ	ಙ	ಚ	ಛ	ಜ	ಝ	ಞ	ತ	ಥ
ಘ	ಘ	ಙ	ಚ	ಛ	ಜ	ಝ	ಞ	ತ	ಥ	ದ
ಙ	ಙ	ಚ	ಛ	ಜ	ಝ	ಞ	ತ	ಥ	ದ	ಧ
ಚ	ಚ	ಛ	ಜ	ಝ	ಞ	ತ	ಥ	ದ	ಧ	ನ
ಛ	ಛ	ಜ	ಝ	ಞ	ತ	ಥ	ದ	ಧ	ನ	ಪ
ಜ	ಜ	ಝ	ಞ	ತ	ಥ	ದ	ಧ	ನ	ಪ	ಫ
ಝ	ಝ	ಞ	ತ	ಥ	ದ	ಧ	ನ	ಪ	ಫ	ಬ
ಞ	ಞ	ತ	ಥ	ದ	ಧ	ನ	ಪ	ಫ	ಬ	ಭ
ತ	ತ	ಥ	ದ	ಧ	ನ	ಪ	ಫ	ಬ	ಭ	ಮ
ಥ	ಥ	ದ	ಧ	ನ	ಪ	ಫ	ಬ	ಭ	ಮ	ಯ
ದ	ದ	ಧ	ನ	ಪ	ಫ	ಬ	ಭ	ಮ	ಯ	ರ
ಧ	ಧ	ನ	ಪ	ಫ	ಬ	ಭ	ಮ	ಯ	ರ	ಲ
ನ	ನ	ಪ	ಫ	ಬ	ಭ	ಮ	ಯ	ರ	ಲ	ವ
ಪ	ಪ	ಫ	ಬ	ಭ	ಮ	ಯ	ರ	ಲ	ವ	ಶ
ಫ	ಫ	ಬ	ಭ	ಮ	ಯ	ರ	ಲ	ವ	ಶ	ಷ
ಬ	ಬ	ಭ	ಮ	ಯ	ರ	ಲ	ವ	ಶ	ಷ	ಸ
ಭ	ಭ	ಮ	ಯ	ರ	ಲ	ವ	ಶ	ಷ	ಸ	ಹ
ಮ	ಮ	ಯ	ರ	ಲ	ವ	ಶ	ಷ	ಸ	ಹ	ಳ
ಯ	ಯ	ರ	ಲ	ವ	ಶ	ಷ	ಸ	ಹ	ಳ	ಱ
ರ	ರ	ಲ	ವ	ಶ	ಷ	ಸ	ಹ	ಳ	ಱ	ಱ
ಲ	ಲ	ವ	ಶ	ಷ	ಸ	ಹ	ಳ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ
ವ	ವ	ಶ	ಷ	ಸ	ಹ	ಳ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ
ಶ	ಶ	ಷ	ಸ	ಹ	ಳ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ
ಷ	ಷ	ಸ	ಹ	ಳ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ
ಸ	ಸ	ಹ	ಳ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ
ಹ	ಹ	ಳ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ
ಳ	ಳ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ
ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ	ಱ

ವಿ.ಕೆ.ಎಂ.ರತ್ನ

Figure 5. A chart showing alphabet of Amaragannada scripts along with their equivalent in Kannada script (from Reddy, 2002).

