

Notes on the 156 Tamil “characters” captured in the dataset

Tamil, like most of the other Indic scripts, is defined as a “syllabic alphabet” in that the unit of encoding is a syllable. In general, these syllabic units are the smallest units of isolated writing in the Indic scripts, and hence the nearest thing to isolated characters.

These syllabic units correspond to

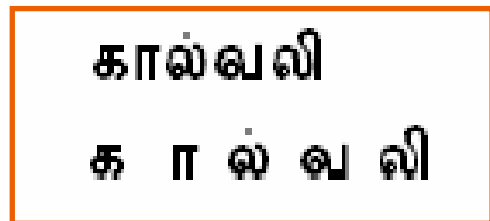
- isolated vowels (e.g., ‘u’, represented as உ)
- isolated consonants (with inherent neutral vowel a) (e.g., ‘ka’, represented as க)
- CV combinations where a consonant has been modified by a vowel and is indicated by a vowel diacritic (e.g. ‘ku’, represented as கு)
- Clusters of 2 or more consonants modified by vowels (CCV, CCCV, and so forth) (e.g. ‘kshū’, represented as கூறு)

Most Indic scripts have the order of 600 CV units and as many as 20,000 CCV ones in theory, although only a much smaller subset (especially of CCV units) is used in practice. In general, the graphic units corresponding to these syllables show distinctive internal structure and a constituent set of graphemes. However the V diacritics and ligatures for C clusters are not standardized in some scripts. Sometimes the C clusters are represented as new opaque graphemes. In the online HWR scenario, the beginnings of most graphemes are marked by pen-lifts, but not always. In particular, certain V diacritics may be fused inseparably with the underlying C grapheme. Different V diacritics may be visually similar and differ only in how they attach to the C grapheme.

The present-day Tamil script is simpler than other Indic scripts because of the use of the lack of separate graphemes for voiced, voiceless and aspirated Cs and the use of vowel muting to unravel C clusters into linear sequences of C graphemes. In addition, some of the vowel diacritics are written in Tamil as distinct symbols to the left and/or right of the C grapheme.

This results in Tamil being written linearly as a sequence of visually discrete symbols, which we will refer to as characters, for lack of a better term. However as mentioned earlier, these characters do not have a consistent linguistic interpretation, nor is it claimed that they represent the only or best way to separate Tamil writing into a linear sequence of symbols.

The set of 156 “characters” represented in this collection includes in addition to independent V and C graphemes CV combinations where the vowel diacritics attach above or below the base C grapheme or are otherwise difficult to segment, and those vowel diacritics that occur as distinct characters to the left or right of the base C. The set also includes selected C cluster ligatures and their CV combinations, for a total of 156 “characters”. The adjoining figure shows a Tamil word split into “characters” by this definition of Tamil characters.



Like all Indic scripts, there is no tradition of writing Tamil in boxes; however informal observation of several native Tamil writers revealed that they could write “characters” as defined here, in boxes consistently with no or minimal training.

The entire set of 156 characters is shown in Table 1. Table 2 provides the sequences of Unicode characters corresponding to the 156 characters used in this dataset.

References

Experiences in Collection of Handwriting Data for Online Handwriting Recognition in Indic Scripts, Ajay S Bhaskarabhatla and Sriganesh Madhvanath, 4th Intl Conf. Linguistic Resources and Evaluation (LREC 2004), Lisbon, Portugal, May 26-28, 2004

Florian Coulmas, ``The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Writing Systems," First Ed. pp. 229-230, 1999

Omniglot – A Guide to Written Language. <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/tamil.htm>

Table 1: 156 characters in Tamil dataset

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| அ | த | ஙி | ஷி | ழீ | மு | மு | கூ | ல் |
| ஆ | ந | சி | ஜி | ளீ | ப | பு | ஸ | வ் |
| இ | ப | ஞி | ஹி | நீ | ரு | ரு | ஷ | ழ் |
| ஈ | ம | டி | கூ | ளீ | லு | லூ | ஜ | ள் |
| உ | ய | ணி | கீ | ஸீ | உ | லு | ஹ | ற் |
| ஊ | ர | தி | ஙீ | ஷீ | மு | மு | கூ | ன் |
| எ | ல | நி | சீ | ஜீ | ளு | ளு | க் | ஸ் |
| ஏ | வ | பி | ஞீ | ஹீ | று | றூ | ங் | ஷ் |
| ஐ | ழ | மி | டீ | கூ | னு | னூ | ச் | ஜ் |
| ஓ | ள | யி | ணீ | கு | கூ | ஈ | ஞ் | ஹ் |
| ஔ | ற | ரி | தீ | பு | பூ | ஊ | ட் | கூ |
| ஃ | ன | லி | நீ | சு | சூ | ஊ | ண் | ள் |
| க | ஸ | வி | பீ | ஞ் | னூ | ஊ | த் | |
| ங | ஷ | ழி | மீ | டு | டு | பூ | ந் | |
| ச | ஜ | ளி | யீ | ணு | ணூ | ஸூ | ப் | |
| ஞ | ஹ | றி | ரீ | து | தூ | ஷூ | ம் | |
| ட | கூ | னி | லீ | நு | நூ | ஜூ | ய் | |
| ண | கி | ஸி | வீ | பு | பூ | ஹூ | ர் | |

Table 2: Unicode sequences corresponding to 156 characters

| Class Id | Tamil Character | Unicode |
|----------|-----------------|---------|
| 0 | அ | 0B85 |
| 1 | ஆ | 0B86 |
| 2 | இ | 0B87 |
| 3 | ஈ | 0B88 |
| 4 | உ | 0B89 |
| 5 | ஊ | 0B8A |
| 6 | எ | 0B8E |
| 7 | ஏ | 0B8F |
| 8 | ஐ | 0B90 |
| 9 | ஓ | 0B92 |
| 10 | ஔ | 0B93 |
| 11 | ஃ | 0B83 |

| | | |
|----|-----|----------------|
| 12 | க | 0B95 |
| 13 | ங | 0B99 |
| 14 | ச | 0B9A |
| 15 | ஞ | 0B9E |
| 16 | ட | 0B9F |
| 17 | ண | 0BA3 |
| 18 | த | 0BA4 |
| 19 | ந | 0BA8 |
| 20 | ப | 0BAA |
| 21 | ம | 0BAE |
| 22 | ய | 0BAF |
| 23 | ர | 0BB0 |
| 24 | ல | 0BB2 |
| 25 | வ | 0BB5 |
| 26 | ழ | 0BB4 |
| 27 | ள | 0BB3 |
| 28 | ற | 0BB1 |
| 29 | ன | 0BA9 |
| 30 | ஸ | 0BB8 |
| 31 | ஷ | 0BB7 |
| 32 | ஐ | 0B9C |
| 33 | ஹ | 0BB9 |
| 34 | கூழ | 0B95 0BCD 0BB7 |
| 35 | கி | 0B95 0BBF |
| 36 | நி | 0B99 0BBF |
| 37 | சி | 0B9A 0BBF |
| 38 | ஞி | 0B9E 0BBF |
| 39 | டி | 0B9F 0BBF |
| 40 | ணி | 0BA3 0BBF |
| 41 | தி | 0BA4 0BBF |
| 42 | நி | 0BA8 0BBF |
| 43 | பி | 0BAA 0BBF |
| 44 | மி | 0BAE 0BBF |
| 45 | யி | 0BAF 0BBF |
| 46 | ரி | 0BB0 0BBF |
| 47 | லி | 0BB2 0BBF |
| 48 | வி | 0BB5 0BBF |

| | | |
|----|------|------------------------|
| 49 | ஹி | 0BB4 0BBF |
| 50 | ளி | 0BB3 0BBF |
| 51 | றி | 0BB1 0BBF |
| 52 | னி | 0BA9 0BBF |
| 53 | ஸி | 0BB8 0BBF |
| 54 | ஷி | 0BB7 0BBF |
| 55 | ஜி | 0B9C 0BBF |
| 56 | ஹி | 0BB9 0BBF |
| 57 | கூறி | 0B95 0BCD 0BB7 0BBF |
| 58 | கி | 0B95 0BC0 |
| 59 | நி | 0B99 0BC0 |
| 60 | சி | 0B9A 0BC0 |
| 61 | ஹீ | 0B 9E 0BC0 |
| 62 | ஹி | 0B9F 0BC0 |
| 63 | ஹீ | 0BA3 0BC0 |
| 64 | ஹி | 0BA4 0BC0 |
| 65 | ஹி | 0BA8 0BC0 |
| 66 | ஹி | 0BAA 0BC0 |
| 67 | ஹி | 0BAE 0BC0 |
| 68 | ஹி | 0BAF 0BC0 |
| 69 | ஹி | 0BB0 0BC0 |
| 70 | ஹி | 0BB2 0BC0 |
| 71 | ஹி | 0BB5 0BC0 |
| 72 | ஹி | 0BB4 0BC0 |
| 73 | ஹி | 0BB3 0BC0 |
| 74 | ஹி | 0BB1 0BC0 |
| 75 | ஹி | 0BA9 0BC0 |
| 76 | ஹி | 0BB8 0BC0 |
| 77 | ஹி | 0BB7 0BC0 |
| 78 | ஹி | 0B9C 0BC0 |
| 79 | ஹி | 0BB9 0BC0 |
| 80 | கூறி | 0B95 0BCD 0BB7 0BC0 |
| 81 | ஹி | 0B95 0BC1 |
| 82 | ஹி | 0B99 0BC1 |
| 83 | ஹி | 0B9A 0BC1 |
| 84 | ஹி | 0B9E 0BC1 |
| 85 | ஹி | 0B9F 0BC1 |

| | | |
|-----|------|------------------------|
| 86 | ஊ | 0BA3 0BC1 |
| 87 | து | 0BA4 0BC1 |
| 88 | நு | 0BA8 0BC1 |
| 89 | பு | 0BAA 0BC1 |
| 90 | மு | 0BAE 0BC1 |
| 91 | யு | 0BAF 0BC1 |
| 92 | ரு | 0BB0 0BC1 |
| 93 | லு | 0BB2 0BC1 |
| 94 | வு | 0BB5 0BC1 |
| 95 | சு | 0BB4 0BC1 |
| 96 | ளு | 0BB3 0BC1 |
| 97 | று | 0BB1 0BC1 |
| 98 | னு | 0BA9 0BC1 |
| 99 | கூ | 0B95 0BC2 |
| 100 | நூ | 0B99 0BC2 |
| 101 | தூ | 0B9A 0BC2 |
| 102 | சூ | 0B9E 0BC2 |
| 103 | ஊ | 0B9F 0BC2 |
| 104 | ஊா | 0BA3 0BC2 |
| 105 | தூ | 0BA4 0BC2 |
| 106 | நூ | 0BA8 0BC2 |
| 107 | பூ | 0BAA 0BC2 |
| 108 | மூ | 0BAE 0BC2 |
| 109 | யூ | 0BAF 0BC2 |
| 110 | ரூ | 0BB0 0BC2 |
| 111 | லூ | 0BB2 0BC2 |
| 112 | வூ | 0BB5 0BC2 |
| 113 | சூ | 0BB4 0BC2 |
| 114 | ளூ | 0BB3 0BC2 |
| 115 | றூ | 0BB1 0BC2 |
| 116 | னூ | 0BA9 0BC2 |
| 117 | ா | 0BBE |
| 118 | ெ | 0BC6 |
| 119 | ே | 0BC7 |
| 120 | ை | 0BC8 |
| 121 | ஶ்ரீ | 0BB8 0BCD 0BB0 0BC0 |
| 122 | ஸூ | 0BB8 0BC1 |

| | | |
|-----|------|------------------------|
| 123 | ஷா | 0BB7 0BC1 |
| 124 | ஜா | 0B9C 0BC1 |
| 125 | ஹா | 0BB9 0BC1 |
| 126 | காஷா | 0B95 0BCD 0BB7 0BC1 |
| 127 | ஸா | 0BB8 0BC2 |
| 128 | ஷா | 0BB7 0BC2 |
| 129 | ஜா | 0B9C0BC2 |
| 130 | ஹா | 0BB9 0BC2 |
| 131 | காஷா | 0B95 0BCD 0BB7 0BC2 |
| 132 | க் | 0B95 0BCD |
| 133 | ங் | 0B99 0BCD |
| 134 | க் | 0B9A 0BCD |
| 135 | ஞ் | 0B9E 0BCD |
| 136 | ட் | 0B9F 0BCD |
| 137 | ண் | 0BA3 0BCD |
| 138 | த் | 0BA4 0BCD |
| 139 | ந் | 0BA8 0BCD |
| 140 | ப் | 0BAA 0BCD |
| 141 | ம் | 0BAE 0BCD |
| 142 | ய் | 0BAF 0BCD |
| 143 | ர் | 0BB0 0BCD |
| 144 | ல் | 0BB2 0BCD |
| 145 | வ் | 0BB5 0BCD |
| 146 | ழ் | 0BB4 0BCD |
| 147 | ள் | 0BB3 0BCD |
| 148 | ற் | 0BB1 0BCD |
| 149 | ன் | 0BA9 0BCD |
| 150 | ஸ் | 0BB8 0BCD |
| 151 | ஷ் | 0BB7 0BCD |
| 152 | ஜ் | 0B9C 0BCD |
| 153 | ஹ் | 0BB9 0BCD |
| 154 | காஷ் | 0B95 0BCD 0BB7 0BCD |
| 155 | ஒள | 0B94 |