The akshar package

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Abstract

This package provides tools to deal with special characters in a Devanagari string.

Contents

1 Introduction

When dealing with processing strings in the Devanagari script, normal LaTeX commands usually find some difficulties in distinguishing "normal" characters, like क, and "special" characters, for example ् or ी. Let's consider this example code:

```
\ExplSyntaxOn
\tl_set:Nn \l_tmpa_tl { की}
\tl_count:N \l_tmpa_tl \c_space_token tokens.
\ExplSyntaxOff
```

2 tokens.

The output is 2, but the number of characters in it is only one! The reason is quite simple: the compiler treats ी as a normal character, and it shouldn't do so.

To tackle that, this package provides expl3 functions to "convert" a given string, written in the Devanagari script, to a sequence of token lists. each of these token lists is a "true" Devanagari character. You can now do anything you want with this sequence; and this package does provide some front-end macros for some simple actions on the input string.

2 User manual

2.1 LaTeX 2_ε macros

`\aksharStrLen`

`\aksharStrLen {⟨token list⟩}`

Return the number of Devanagari characters in the ⟨token list⟩.

There are 4 characters in नमस्कार.
expl3 returns 7, which is wrong.

```
There are \aksharStrLen{ नमस्कार} characters in नमस्कार.\par
\ExplSyntaxOn
\pkg{expl3}~returns~\tl_count:n { नमस्कार},~which~is~wrong.
\ExplSyntaxOff
```

\aksharStrChar

\aksharStrChar {⟨token list⟩} {⟨n⟩}

Return the *n*-th character of the token list.

3rd character of नमस्कार is स्का.
It is not स.

```
3rd character of नमस्कारis \aksharStrChar{ नमस्कार}{3}.\par
\ExplSyntaxOn
It~is~not~\tl_item:nn { नमस्कार} {3}.
\ExplSyntaxOff
```

2.2 expl3 functions

This section assumes that you have a basic knowledge in LaTeX3 programming. All macros in 2.1 directly depend on the following function, so it is much more powerful than all features we have described above.

\akshar_convert:Nn
\akshar_convert:(cn|Nx|cx)

\akshar_convert:Nn ⟨seq var⟩ {⟨token list⟩}

This function converts ⟨token list⟩ to a sequence of characters, that sequence is stored in ⟨seq var⟩. The assignment to ⟨seq var⟩ is local to the current TeX group.

न, म, स्का, and र

```
\ExplSyntaxOn
\akshar_convert:Nn \l_tmpa_seq { नमस्कार}
\seq_use:Nnnn \l_tmpa_seq { ~and~ } { ,~ } { ,~and~ }
\ExplSyntaxOff
```

3 Implementation

```
⟨@@=akshar⟩
⟨*package⟩
```

Declare the package. By loading fontspec, xparse, and in turn, expl3, are also loaded.

```
\RequirePackage{fontspec}
\ProvidesExplPackage {akshar} {2020/05/17} {0.1}
  {Support for syllables in the Devanagari script (JV)}
```

3.1 Variable declarations

\c__akshar_joining_tl
\c__akshar_diacritics_tl

These variables store the special characters we need to take into account:

- \c__akshar_joining_tl is the "connecting" character ◌्.
- \c__akshar_diacritics_tl is the list of all diacritics.

```
\tl_const:Nn \c__akshar_joining_tl { □}
\tl_const:Nn \c__akshar_diacritics_tl
  {
    □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □,
    □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □,
    □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □, □
  }
```

(End definition for \c__akshar_joining_tl and \c__akshar_diacritics_tl.)

\l__akshar_prev_joining_bool

When we get to a normal character, we need to know whether it is joined, i.e. whether the previous character is the joining character. This boolean variable takes care of that.

```
\bool_new:N \l__akshar_prev_joining_bool
```

(End definition for `\l__akshar_prev_joining_bool`.)

`\l__akshar_char_seq`

This local sequence stores the output of the converter.

```
\seq_new:N \l__akshar_char_seq
```

(End definition for `\l__akshar_char_seq`.)

`\l__akshar_tmp_tl`
`\l__akshar_tmp_seq`

Some temporary variables.

```
\tl_new:N \l__akshar_tmp_tl
\seq_new:N \l__akshar_tmp_seq
```

(End definition for `\l__akshar_tmp_tl` and `\l__akshar_tmp_seq`.)

3.2 Utilities

`\tl_if_in:NoTF`

When we get to a character which is not the joining one, we need to know if it is a diacritic. The current character is stored in a variable, so an expanded variant is needed. We only need it to expand only **o**nce.

```
\prg_generate_conditional_variant:Nnn \tl_if_in:Nn { No } { TF }
```

(End definition for `\tl_if_in:NoTF`.)

3.3 The `\akshar_convert` function

`\akshar_convert:Nn`
`\akshar_convert:cn`
`\akshar_convert:Nx`
`\akshar_convert:cx`

This converts #2 to a sequence of true Devanagari characters. The sequence is set to #1, which should be a sequence variable. The assignment is local.

```
\cs_new:Npn \akshar_convert:Nn #1 #2
  {
```

Clear anything stored in advance. We don't want different calls of the function to conflict with each other.

```
    \seq_clear:N \l__akshar_char_seq
    \bool_set_false:N \l__akshar_prev_joining_bool
```

Loop through every token of the input.

```
    \tl_map_variable:NNn {#2} \l__akshar_map_tl
      {
        \tl_if_in:NoTF \c__akshar_diacritics_tl {\l__akshar_map_tl}
          {
```

It is a diacritic. We append the current diacritic to the last item of the sequence instead of pushing the diacritic to a new sequence item.

```
            \seq_pop_right:NN \l__akshar_char_seq \l__akshar_tmp_tl
            \seq_put_right:Nx \l__akshar_char_seq
              { \l__akshar_tmp_tl \l__akshar_map_tl }
          }
          {
            \tl_if_eq:NNTF \l__akshar_map_tl \c__akshar_joining_tl
              {
```

In this case, the character is the joining character, ◌्. What we do is similar to the above case, but `\l__akshar_prev_joining_bool` is set to true so that the next character is also appended to this item.

```
                \seq_pop_right:NN \l__akshar_char_seq \l__akshar_tmp_tl
                \seq_put_right:Nx \l__akshar_char_seq
                  { \l__akshar_tmp_tl \l__akshar_map_tl }
                \bool_set_true:N \l__akshar_prev_joining_bool
              }
              {
```

Now the character is normal. We see if we can push to a new item or not. It depends on the boolean variable.

```
                  \bool_if:NTF \l__akshar_prev_joining_bool
                    {
                      \seq_pop_right:NN \l__akshar_char_seq \l__akshar_tmp_tl
                      \seq_put_right:Nx \l__akshar_char_seq
                        { \l__akshar_tmp_tl \l__akshar_map_tl }
                      \bool_set_false:N \l__akshar_prev_joining_bool
                    }
                    {
                      \seq_put_right:Nx \l__akshar_char_seq { \l__akshar_map_tl }
                    }
                }
            }
        }
```

Set #1 to `\l__akshar_char_seq`. The assignment is local, and I have not found a way to automatically pick `\seq_set_eq` or `\seq_gset_eq` based on the name of the sequence variable.

```
    \seq_set_eq:NN #1 \l__akshar_char_seq
  }
```

Generate variants that might be helpful for some.

```
\cs_generate_variant:Nn \akshar_convert:Nn { cn, Nx, cx }
```

(End definition for *\tl_if_in:NoTF* and *\akshar_convert:Nn*. These functions are documented on page ??.)

3.4 Front-end LaTeX 2$_\varepsilon$ macros

\aksharStrLen Expands to the length of the string.

```
\NewExpandableDocumentCommand \aksharStrLen {m}
  {
    \akshar_convert:Nn \l__akshar_tmp_seq {#1}
    \seq_count:N \l__akshar_tmp_seq
  }
```

(End definition for *\aksharStrLen*. This function is documented on page 1.)

\aksharStrChar Returns the *n*-th character of the string.

```
\NewExpandableDocumentCommand \aksharStrChar {mm}
  {
    \akshar_convert:Nn \l__akshar_tmp_seq {#1}
    \seq_item:Nn \l__akshar_tmp_seq {#2}
  }
```

(End definition for *\aksharStrChar*. This function is documented on page 2.)

```
⟨/package⟩
```

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