

## FOREWORD

Sanskrit or the Devanāgarī is preeminently a Language of the Soul. Thus it is a far more perfect vehicle for consciousness than any other, for its sound forms reproduce the Soul of things. For instance: A picture of an old, gnarled tree may to one person suggest but ugliness and deformity; to another, a more spiritually evolved person, it will speak wholly of courage, endurance and a will to live that even the storm's raging blasts cannot defeat. The one sees only the outer form; to the other, the Soul of the tree stands revealed in all its beauty. The first would reproduce in picture the form; the second would reproduce the picture and ensoul the form. Thus it is with languages; all express the form of things, but in Sanskrit we have that "Something" which transcends the form and reveals the soul. Thus in Sanskrit sounds and their right intonation, lie hidden magical powers. This inheres in the fact that Sanskrit is made up of the *natural* sounds of the Cosmos, and the Ancient Magic held the Key to its hidden potencies. Nature is the Great Magician.

Recently in Los Angeles a gentleman intoned a certain sound over the radio and that sound put out lighted matches held by hundreds of persons in their own homes in that city. It was a prearranged test, and a living proof of the Hidden power resident in Sound.

May we call attention to the *Theosophical Glossary* by H.P.B. and the *Dictionary of Theosophical Terms* by Houlst, which we have found helpful in preparing this brochure.

The student who will give ten minutes each day to concentrated study of the Devanāgarī will progress and unfold the power to understand it. He will also find that he hears sounds and tones that heretofore had escaped his notice.

The undiscovered goal lies just ahead;

Forge onward!

Shila A. Merrell-Wolff

## SANSKRIT

### THE LANGUAGE OF THE GODS

The Ancient Tradition tells us that Sanskrit is the most perfect of all languages; it also indicates that it will be the Universal Language of the future.

Sanskrit letters are musical and when correctly intoned are said to have magical power. These letters are arranged in the Sacred Mantrams so that they become musical notes and have the Occult Potencies of the “Eternal Sound.” There are about three times as many letters in the Sanskrit Alphabet as in the Hebrew. This number makes possible exquisitely fine shades of interpretation of thought and thus would seem to indicate that Sanskrit should be the philosophical language par excellence. It also should be, and I believe this is conceded, especially adapted to express metaphysical concepts. The Latin Script with its twenty-six letters has proven totally inadequate to express the more subtle shades of meaning involved in thought processes. But with an alphabet of some forty-nine letters, plus many combinations of letters merging to make others, the possibilities are intriguing. Every letter has not only its equivalent in other languages, but numerous other significations which depend upon the characteristics of the object or subject studied. Many Sanskrit words in general use already have been incorporated in Standard Dictionaries.

“In all alphabets every letter has its rationale and this is especially true of Sanskrit, wherein each letter is a cause and an effect of a preceding cause; thus certain combinations of these letters often produce magical effects. The vowels especially contain most occult and formidable potencies.” (*Secret Doctrine*, Vol. 1, p. 94)

There are 14 vowels, (2 x 7) and 35 consonants (5 x 7) making a total of 49 letters; 49 is the number of the manifested universe: the balance of the letters are peculiar combinations, as when

two or more consonants come together without a vowel sound between them they are written as one character. The accent as used in ancient days was wholly musical, at present emphasis dictates the accent.

Sanskrit is written in what is commonly called the Devanāgarī, or the “Language of the Gods.” This may indicate that it was the language taught infant humanity by the Divine Messengers guiding the evolution of man in those early cycles of manifestation. That there is a language of Divine Origin none doubt who perceive an Universe of Law and Order.

The magical potency of sound and speech has long been conceded by students of the so-called mysteries. I say so-called, because in reality there is nothing mysterious for everything is governed by Law; it may indeed be law not as yet known to mass-man, thus to him it seems mysterious.

The *Secret Doctrine* tells us that “to pronounce a word is to evoke a thought and make it present,” also that “the magnetic potency of human speech is the commencement of every manifestation in the Occult World”; that “Names and words are either beneficent or maleficent, venomous or health-giving according to the hidden influences attached to the letters that compose them.” If this be true, then how important a knowledge of the Devanāgarī characters becomes. If in the Beginning a true reflection of Omnipotent Thought and Power was given to Man, and Sanskrit is really the “Language of the Gods,” then this would account for the magical powers inhering in the correct intonation of its words and Mantrams.

## RULES

A simple arrangement of the rules of pronunciation is here offered which will “be sufficient to guide the student in an approximation of correct Devanāgarī.”

**ACCENT:** Wherever it is possible the word will be marked to indicate the stress to be used. This is either acute or grave. The long vowel usually indicates heavy accent.

**VOWELS:** A vowel is always understood after every consonant, and for this purpose the vowel “A” is most frequently heard in Sanskrit. For instance, Kama would be written “KM” (कर्म) in the Devanāgarī script.

Note the pronunciation of the vowel “A,” which is almost invariably mispronounced by Westerners.

A – pronounced like “a” in “organ,” or like the “u” in “up.”

Ā – pronounced like the “a” in “father.”

I – pronounced like the “I” in “pin.”

Ī – pronounced like the “e” in “me.”

O – pronounced as the “o” in “pole.”

U – pronounced like the “u” in “full.”

Ū – pronounced like the “u” in “true” or the “oo” in “too.”

AI – pronounced like the “I” in “tribe” or “tight.”

AU – pronounced like the “au” in “kraut.”

Y – pronounced like “I.”

R – pronounced like “re’ in fibre.”

L – pronounced like the “le” in “unable.”

E – pronounced like the “a” in “say.”

V – is pronounced as the “v” in “vase” except when it occurs after another consonant, then it is pronounced as the “w” in “won.”

The words “Brahma” and “Brahmā” are good examples of the rules of pronunciation. The first one is pronounced as though written “Brumuh,” no accent. The second one is pronounced “Bru-māh,” accent on the last syllable, indicated by the heavy vowel. (For the information of the new student, the dash (-) or the carrot (^) are used interchangeably in different systems.)

**CONSONANTS:** Consonants have the usual English pronunciation with the following exceptions:

C and CH – pronounced like “ch” in “church.”

G – is always hard as in “give.”

J – is always as the “j” in “joy.”

H – pronounced separately, with few exceptions, as b’ h, d’ h.

SH – pronounced like “sh” in “show.”

K – pronounced like “c” in “cup.”

Ñ – pronounced like the “ng” in “sing.”

N – pronounced like the “n” in “singe.”

**NOTE:** With ENGLISH words written in the Devanāgarī characters, the “h” immediately following a consonant unites with it into one sound, thus:

Bh is pronounced like the “v” in “vain.”

Ph – pronounced like the “f” in “fund.”

Th – pronounced like the “th” in “thin” or “path.”

Dh – pronounced like the “th” in “then.”

Sanskrit consonant of the lingual class is indicated by a dot placed beneath the consonant, (ṁ) but it does not alter its sound.

*English* words written in the Devanāgarī are to be pronounced phonetically. No attention should be paid to the spelling, but the sound should be represented as nearly as is possible. For example, take the word Dharma, written (धर्म). First the D, then the A, then the R above the line and the M below again. The transliteration is according to sound.