LESSON 1

THE SANSKRIT ALPHABET

1. The Sanskrit alphabet is organized as follows, reading from left to right:

Vowels (when not combined with consonants)

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
\text{अ} & \text{आ} & \text{इ} & \text{ई} & \text{उ} & \text{ऊ} \\
\text{क} & \text{क्ष} & \text{ल} \\
\text{प} & \text{अो} & \text{प्र} & \text{अ०} & \text{अ००} \\
\end{array}
\]

Consonants (with inherent vowel \( a \))

Velar: \( क \) ka \( ख \) kha \( ग \) ga \( घ \) gha \( ङ \) na
Palatals: \( च \) ca \( छ \) cha \( ज \) ja \( झ \) jha \( झ \) na
Cerebrals: \( ट \) ta \( ठ \) tha \( ड \) da \( ढ \) dha \( ण \) na
Dentals: \( त \) ta \( थ \) tha \( द \) da \( ध \) dha \( न \) na
Labials: \( प \) pa \( फ \) pha \( ब \) ba \( भ \) bha \( म \) ma
Semivowels: \( य \) ya \( र \) ra \( ठ \) la \( ल \) va
Sibilants: \( श \) sa \( छ \) sa \( स \) sa
Aspirate: \( ह \) ha

(Add-on signs: \( \sim m \) (anusvāra) : \( h \) (visarga)

\( \$ ' \) (avagraha) - the apostrophe
(used to indicate a lost 'a' sound)

2. Below is a guide to pronunciation of the respective Sanskrit sounds for native speakers of American English. It should be kept in mind that these are only approximate equivalents.

The vowels above should be pronounced as follows:
a - like the \( a \) in organ or the \( u \) in cut.
\( ā \) - like the \( a \) in car, held twice as long as short \( a \).
i - like the \( i \) in chin.
\( ī \) - like the \( ee \) in week, held twice as long as short \( i \).
u - like the u in bash.
ū - like the u in rule but held twice as long as short u.
ɹ - like the ri in rim, (regionally as ri).
ʃ - like the ree in reed, (regionally as root).
l - like l followed by r (lr).
e - like the e in they.
ai - like the ai in aisle.
o - like the o in go.
au - like the ow in how.
ṃ (anusvāra) - before pause, pronounced like m, but contextually changes like n in bingo, punch, and mint.
h (visarga) - a final h-sound: ah is pronounced like cha.

The consonants are pronounced as follows:
k - as in kick
kh - as in Eckhart
g - as in give
gh - as in dig-hard
n - as in sing
c - as in chair
ch - as in

Cerebrals are pronounced with tongue to roof of mouth, but the following dentals are pronounced with tongue against teeth:
t - as in tub but with tongue against teeth.
th - as in light-heart but with tongue against teeth.
d - as in dove but with tongue against teeth.
dh - as in red-hot but with tongue against teeth.
n - as in nut but with tongue between teeth.
p - as in pipe
ph - as in uphill (not f)

l - as in light
v - as in vine
3. All vowels are considered to be voiced sounds and do not have aspiration. In the following chart, the term ‘voice’ refers to a sonorous vibration, while the term ‘aspiration’ refers to a rush of air. The characters ŋ, ŋ̃, and l̃, refer to nasal counter parts of y, v, and l. The phonetic analysis of Sanskrit consonants is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point of Articulation</th>
<th>Stops</th>
<th>Semi-Vowels</th>
<th>Sibilants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Voice</td>
<td>+Voice</td>
<td>+Voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Asp</td>
<td>+Asp</td>
<td>+Asp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+Nasal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Velar</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>kh</td>
<td>g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palatal</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>ch</td>
<td>j</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cerebral</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>th</td>
<td>d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>th</td>
<td>d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labial</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>ph</td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. The following character charts provide a clear view of the basic calligraphic shapes of the Devanāgarī letters, which are traditionally written with a pen with a slanted tip. There are minor regional differences in the shapes of Devanāgarī characters, and the shapes in these charts, as well as the shapes of Devanāgarī characters in the rest of this book, are close to the typography of the well known Nīrṇāyasāgara Press of Bombay.
अ आ ई उ ऊ ए ऐ ई उ ऊ
a ā ī ī ī u ū
ओ अं अः
au amḥ ah
क ख ग घ ङ
ka kha ga gha na
च छ ज झ छ ज ळ
ca cha ja jha ṇa
ट ठ ड ढ ण
ta tha ḍa ḍha ṇa
तथ धन
ta tha da dha na
प फ ब भ म
pa pha ba bha ma
य र ल व
ya ra la va
श प ह क्ष ज
śa șa sa ha kṣa jñ̄a

Special Consonant Clusters
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowel</th>
<th>Add-on Vowel signs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>अ</td>
<td>consonant X by itself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>आ</td>
<td>का</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>इ</td>
<td>किकी</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ई</td>
<td>की</td>
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<tr>
<td>ऊ</td>
<td>कु</td>
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<tr>
<td>ऋ</td>
<td>कु</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ऋ</td>
<td>कृ</td>
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<tr>
<td>ए</td>
<td>कृ</td>
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<tr>
<td>ऐ</td>
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<td>ओ</td>
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<tr>
<td>आः</td>
<td>काः</td>
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<tr>
<td>आः</td>
<td>काः</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Add-on signs for न and ल
5. Consonant-Vowel Combinations (Exceptions marked with "•")

- to
- ta
- ti
- te
- ti
- to
- • ta
- • te
- • ti
- • to
- • ti
- • to
- • • ta
- • • te
- • • ti
- • • to
- • • • ta
- • • • te
- • • • ti
- • • • to
- • • • • ta
- • • • • te
- • • • • ti
- • • • • to
-  •  •  •  • ta
-  •  •  •  • te
-  •  •  •  • ti
-  •  •  •  • to
-  •  •  •  •  • ta
-  •  •  •  •  • te
-  •  •  •  •  • ti
-  •  •  •  •  • to
-  •  •  •  •  •  • ta
-  •  •  •  •  •  • te
-  •  •  •  •  •  • ti
-  •  •  •  •  •  • to
-  •  •  •  •  •  •  • ta
-  •  •  •  •  •  •  • te
-  •  •  •  •  •  •  • ti
-  •  •  •  •  •  •  • to
6. Consonant Clusters

When two or more consonants occur successively without any intervening vowels, the consonants are written in a conjoined form.

In writing these conjoined forms, there are two principle ways:

1) Horizontal clusters: \( \overline{ccc} \)
2) Vertical clusters: \( \checkmark \)

Horizontal clusters are read from left to right, and vertical clusters are read from top to bottom. By convention, certain combinations are always written as horizontal clusters or as vertical clusters, while certain combinations are written either way.

The rules for making consonant clusters depend mostly on whether the first consonant has a vertical line from top to bottom or a short central stem from which the character is suspended.

1) In a horizontal cluster, the final vertical lines of all but the last consonant are dropped, and then the remaining parts are joined together. Examples:

\[ \text{व + य = ॐ + य = ल्य} \]
\[ \text{प + न = े + न = ल्न} \]
\[ \text{त + म + य = े + म + य = त्य} \]

2) Characters suspended from a central stem have several forms. Doubling such a character is usually done by putting a truncated version of the sign beneath the full one, as in the examples below.

\[ \text{ट + ट = ट} \]
\[ \text{ढ + ढ = ढ} \]
\[ \text{ञ + ह = ह} \]
\[ \text{श + ह = ह (or श)} \]
3) Other combinations are handled in various ways.

\[ \text{र} + \text{ य} = \text{रप्} \]
\[ \text{ं} + \text{ य} = \text{ं} \]
\[ \text{क} + \text{ य} = \text{कय} \]
\[ \text{क} + \text{ त} = \text{कत्} \]

When र is the second character in a consonant cluster, it may be written either below or after the first consonant.

\[ \text{क} + \text{ ठ} = \text{कठ} \text{ or } \text{क} \]
\[ \text{म} + \text{ ठ} = \text{मठ} \text{ or } \text{म} \]

4) Special forms: श and र

a. For श a special combining form is generally used. Alternatively, र may be used.

\[ \text{श} + \text{ च} = \text{शच} \text{ or } \text{श} \]
\[ \text{श} + \text{ ठ} = \text{शठ} \text{ or } \text{श} \]
\[ \text{श} + \text{ र} = \text{श्र} \text{ (but not } \text{शर}) \]

b. र has several combining forms, depending on its position in the syllable and on the character it combines with.

(i) Following another consonant:

a) Consonants with a vertical line. The र is represented by an oblique line as in the following examples.

\[ \text{प} + \text{ र} = \text{प्र} \text{ pra} \]
\[ \text{क} + \text{ र} = \text{क्र} \text{ kra} \]
\[ \text{ब} + \text{ र} = \text{ब्र} \text{ bra} \]

Note these special forms:

\[ \text{र} + \text{ र} = \text{्र} \text{ tra} \]
\[ \text{क} + \text{ र} = \text{क्र} \text{ kra} \]

b) Consonants with a central stem. The र is represented by the sign • put below the
consonant.

\[ \text{र + र} = द्र \text{ tra} \]
\[ \text{ह + र} = ह्र \text{ dra} \]

Note exception:

\[ \text{द + र} = द्र \text{ dra} \]

(ii) Preceding a syllable-final consonant. The र is represented by a curve put over the following consonant and its vowel sign. If the vowel sign extends above the top bar, the curve goes to the right of the vowel sign.

\[ \text{र + भ} = र्म र्मा} \]
\[ \text{र + व} = र्व र्वा} \]
\[ \text{र + वे} = र्वे र्वे} \]
\[ \text{र + को} = को र्को} \]

7. List of Consonant Clusters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonant Cluster</th>
<th>Transliteration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>k-ka</td>
<td>कक</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k-kha</td>
<td>कख</td>
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<tr>
<td>k-ca</td>
<td>कच</td>
</tr>
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<td>k-ṇa</td>
<td>कण</td>
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<td>k-ta</td>
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<tr>
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<td>कत्य</td>
</tr>
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</table>

| न-का  | नः  |
| न-कः-ता  | नः  |
| न-कः-त-या  | नः  |
| न-कः-या  | नः  |
| नः-कः-शा  | नः  |
| न-कः-श-वा  | नः  |
| नः-ख-या  | नः  |
| नः-गा  | नः  |
| नः-गः-या  | नः  |
| नः-घा  | नः  |
| नः-घः-या  | नः  |
| नः-घः-रा  | नः  |
| नः-ना  | नः  |
| नः-ना  | नः  |
| नः-मा  | नः  |
| नः-या  | नः  |
d-gh-ra  दः
d-ma  दम
d-ya  दय
gh-yा  घय
gh-ra  घर
ta  ता
tha  ठा
dā  दा
d-ya  धय
d-ra  धर
d-ya  धय
dha  धा
na  ना
ya  न्या
va  वा
t-k-ra  तकर
t-ta  तर
t-t-ya  त्य
t-t-ra  तः
t-t-va  त्वा
t-tha  ठथ
t-na  ठन
t-n-ya  ठय
t-pa  तपा
t-p-ra  तपर
t-ma  तमा
t-m-ya  त्य
t-ya  तय
t-ra  तः
t-r-ya  त्रय
t-va  त्व
t-sa
t-s-na
t-s-n-ya

th-ya

d-ga
d-g-ra
d-gha
d-gh-ra
d-da
d-d-ya
d-dha
d-dh-ya
d-na
d-ba
d-bha
d-bh-ya
d-ma
d-ya
d-ra
d-r-ya
d-va
d-v-ya
dh-na
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dh-ma
dh-ya
dh-ra
dh-va

n-ta
n-t-ya
n-t-ra
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<td>ś-c-ya</td>
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<tr>
<td>ś-ya</td>
<td>शय, शय</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. **Punctuation**

1) To represent a single consonant, a short oblique line is drawn from the lower right point of the letter म, न, ल, श

2) The end of a sentence is indicated by a single vertical line.
   रामो गृहं गच्छति।

3) In modern editions of Sanskrit texts, most types of English punctuation will be found: , : ?

**Exercises**

1) **Write the series of the following:**
   घ, ठ, ल, श, ल्ल, प्र

2) **Write the romanized words below in devanagari, and put the words in Devanagari into romanization:**
रामेना 1क्षति
kamalamb 2ज्ञानम
daruṇā 3शकनति
vanayoḥ 4व्रत्यस्या
māṭpām 5प्रज्ञाभ्याम
jalaḥ 6कप्तनम
auṣadham 7स्वप्नेभ्याह
oghahaḥ 8श्रोत्रानाम
iha 9कपय्यानाश
itib 10वक्ष्याति

ूकराहः

झाप्ते

devaṇam
guptasya

रामय
vaiṣṇवयम्

कमठैः

व्याल्यानम्

क्रप्यायाः

प्रक्रमते

भवतः

स्थायति

उल्लनम्

गच्छति

उमरुः

उज्ज्वलतवम्

आयुः

चातुर्वर्ष्यम्

3) Write the following in devanagari:

1) kena mārgeṇa bhoḥ svāmin dehi brahmanayo bhavet,
   tvam kṛpaṁ kuru me svāmin namāmi caraṇau tava.
2) gurudarśitamārgeṇa manahśuddhip tu kārayet,
   anityaṁ khaṇḍayet sarvaṁ, yat kṣicidātmāgocaram.
3) kaśīkṣetram tannivāso jāhnauv carapodakam, 
gurur viśveśvarāḥ sākṣāt tārakām brahma niścitam.
4) laukikāt karmaṇo jānti jñāna-hinā bhavāvaevam,
jñānī tu bhāvāvayet sarvām karma niśkarma yat kṛtām.
5) pīṇḍam kīr. tu mahādeva padam kīṁ samudāhṛtam,
rūpaṁ ca rūpaṁ kīṁ etadākhyāhi śaṅkara.

4) Transcribe the following into Roman script:

नास्ति बुद्धिर्युक्तस्य न चायुक्तस्य भावना ।

न चायावयत: शान्तिरशान्तस्य कृत: सुखम् ॥
इन्द्रियाणि हि बरतं यन्मनोऽनुबिधीयते ॥

तदस्य हरति प्रजा वायुर्नावमिवामथसि ॥
तस्मायस्य महाबाहो निगृहीतानि सर्वश: ॥
इन्द्रियाणििन्द्रियायेश्वरस्य प्रजा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥

या निशा सर्वभूतानां तस्या जागर्ति संपर्य ॥

यस्यां जागर्ति भृतानि सा निशा पश्यतो मुने: ॥

आपूर्यमाणिक्ष्मप्रतिष्ठेय समुद्रपाण: प्रविशान्ति यथत: ॥

तदन्त कामा यं प्रविशान्ति सर्वं स शान्तिमाण्योति न कामकामी ॥

भवन्ति नाश्त्वरसं: फ़ोल्ड्नाथम्ब्रभिस्रीमित्तिनो यनं: ॥

अनुदत्ता: सत्पुरुषा: समृद्धिः स्वभाव एवेष परोपकारिणाम् ॥

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