

# Sanskrit Course 1 - the Ring of Sounds

अ आ इ ई उ ऊ  
ऋ ॠ ॡ ॢ ॣ  
ए ऐ ओ औ अं अः  
क ख ग घ ङ  
च छ ज झ ञ  
ट ठ ड ढ ण  
त थ द ध न  
प फ ब भ म  
य र ल व  
श ष स ह

**Welcome to this introduction to Sanskrit!**

**This manual is a part of a growing curriculum of tools I have developed for simple and joyful living.**

**I believe in having these tools be accessible to all people. You may have received this free of charge. Remember, I too have basic needs. Should you use the manual, please do donate to my paypal account (credit cards accepted) or write a check.**

**You are welcome to try it out before donating. The suggested donation is \$40. I, too, have been a student with few resources. If this is too much for you - any smaller donation is gratefully accepted. You can always donate more later, when you are more in the flow, or contribute to me by helping spread the word. I believe you know your situation and can meet your own need for contribution better than I can evaluate it.**

**Turning others on to this manual is another form of supporting me. Please do share this with all curious friends, for whom I then have the same donation request.**

**first choice: checks to  
Pierre Couvillion  
c/o 5609 Pennsylvania St  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46220  
or, use [pcouvy@gmail.com](mailto:pcouvy@gmail.com)  
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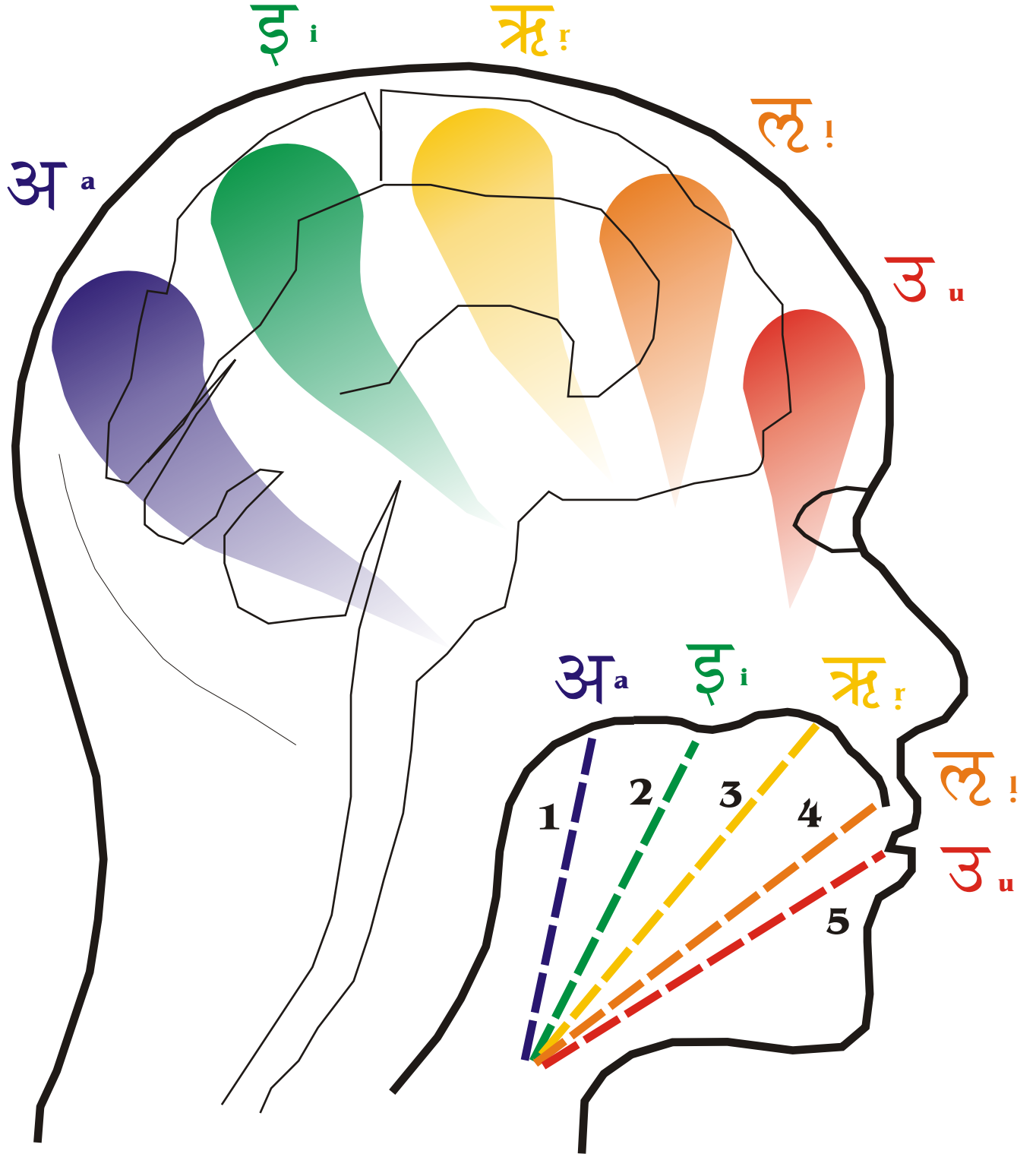
**Continuing the journey, I am happy to work with individuals and groups. Other schools are also listed on my website, including some of my own instructors. I welcome your feedback - praises, corrections and ideas for improvement.**

**Thanks for the interest - Pierre  
[pierreouvillion.com](http://pierreouvillion.com)**



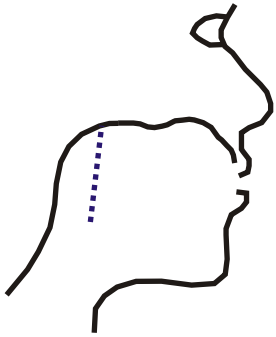
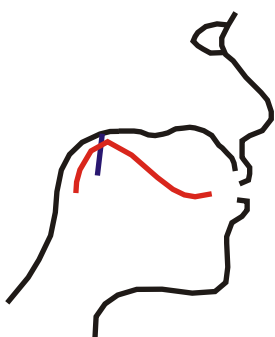
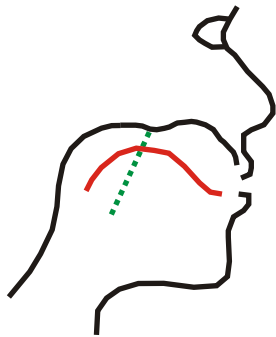
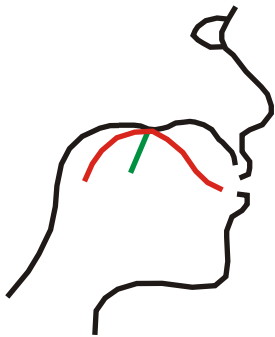
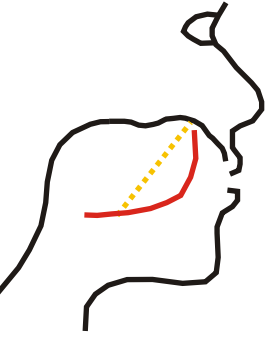
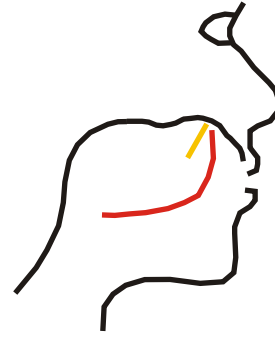

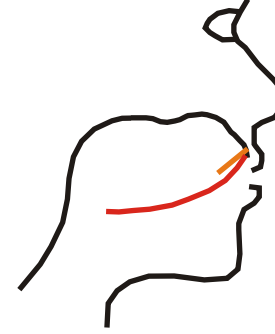
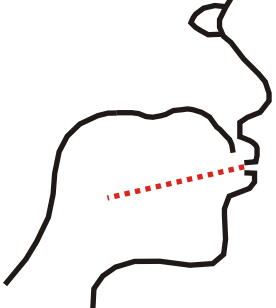
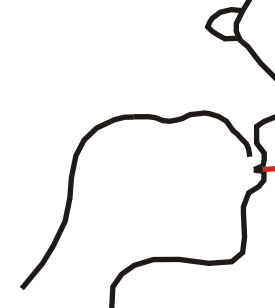
# (Sanskrit) Sanskr̥tam संस्कृतम् means “well-made”

One reason for this is the precision of its sounds. These sounds are energies that vibrate, lighting up specific positions in the palate, brain, sinuses, and subtle body. Release the idea of letters. Instead, feel energies at specific places. Resonate, alight your brain, enjoy!



**Sanskrit teaches 5 specific mouth positions where sound resonates clearly. We use different tongue actions to produce these sounds.**

# 5 mouth positions and **tongue** use

|   | vowels (tones)  | consonants (marks)   |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Position 1</b><br><b>velar</b><br>vowels use no tongue,<br>consonants use the back<br><br>located straight up from<br>the throat, behind the<br>bump of the palate     | <br>"aaaa"   | <br>"ka"            |
| <b>Position 2</b><br><b>palatal</b><br>uses the broad, middle<br>part of the tongue<br><br>located at the hard<br>bump that projects down                                 | <br>"iii"    | <br>"cha"           |
| <b>Position 3</b><br><b>retroflex</b><br>uses the tip of the tongue<br>at the high point, a notch<br>in the palate where<br>the rise above the teeth<br>meets the ceiling | <br>"rrrr"  | <br>?<br>(for now) |
| <b>Position 4</b><br><b>dental</b><br>uses the tip of the tongue<br><br>located at the back<br>of the top teeth   | <br>"llll" | <br>"ta"          |
| <b>Position 5</b><br><b>labial</b><br><br>no tongue use<br><br>located at the lips  | <br>"uuuu" | <br>"pa"          |

# Key to joy in learning - mouth position is primary!

It is normal to make mistakes in learning sanskrit, yoga, or anything else. One could say that most learning is a progression of finer and finer mistakes. What helps learning in sanskrit (and yoga) is an embodied, felt-sense of being more closely correct.

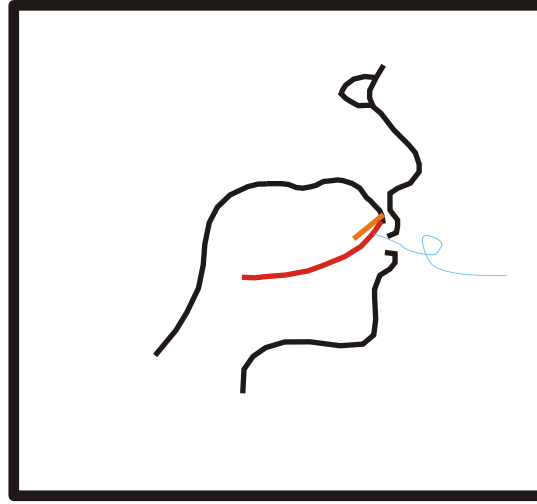
Sanskrit is for you. And the most important step is to feel and enjoy its sounds at specific locations. Remember this as you approach learning the alphabet, move on to sanskrit texts like the Yoga Sutras or the Bhagavad Gita, chant an invocation before a yoga class, or simply "om". Feel specific sounds as energies... taste and enjoy them!

## Order of importance

# 1

Enjoy making specific kinds of sounds at specific spots.

Return to this all the time and practice making the sound, or chant, over and over until it feels true.



Make a clicking sound with the tip of the tongue at the back of the top teeth, release breath as you do so, finishing with the unformed tone.

This primary stage of language is yours to bring to all others, reminding you to feel unique sounds in your mouth and enjoy them.

# 2

Learn this font.

Use this, and read from this, instead of transliterations, (below) as soon as possible.



This is the character for the above sound, in the current script most commonly used to approximate the sounds of sanskrit. Many scripts have been and can be used.

Try to find texts or chants written in this script as it is most likely to be accurate.

# 3

Learn transliterations - you will encounter various ones, especially now, in the internet age. Use them like training wheels, to help you get started; and, take them off as soon as possible.

Know that anything written in this is not possibly, but probably, inaccurate.

Go to the source - sanskrit mouth-position grammar!



This is the accepted international transliteration used to represent the sound. It contains no info to help a native English speaker find the teeth - we use a higher position in the mouth. Nor does it help most of us realize that it is not pronounced at all like "the" or "that".

# preview - SANSKRIT ALPHABET - वर्णमाला varṇamālā

varṇa = "color, class, tribe, letter" mālā = "garland, succession, collection"

Rather than think "alphabet", feel a succession of "colors" through your palate. In this lesson, colors are used to indicate the mouth positions used, to assist in comparisons.

## VOWELS

स्वरः

svaraḥ

"note, tone"

अ आ इ ई उ ऊ  
ऋ ॠ ऌ ॡ  
ए ऐ ओ औ

## CONSONANTS

special consonants used  
to "close" vowels -->

अं अः

व्यञ्जनम्

vyañjanam

"making clear,  
indicating,  
a mark"

### STOPS

स्पृष्ट spr̥ṣṭa  
"touched"

क ख ग घ ङ  
च छ ज झ ञ  
ट ठ ड ढ ण  
त थ द ध न  
प फ ब भ म

### SEMI-VOWELS

अन्तस्थ antastha  
"stand between"

य र ल व

### BREATH SOUNDS

उष्मन् uṣman  
"heat, warmth"

श ष स ह

the sanskrit word for **vowel**, स्वरः svarah, also means "note" or "tone"

A vowel is like energy just passing through us - as in a flute. A vowel can be pronounced independently. The tongue or lips shape vowels, changing them from the original, unshaped "tone", अ (a), into another "tone" - like covering a different hole on a flute.

| transliteration | position(s) | approximate<br>in english | मात्रा mātrā<br>measure-#beats | वृद्धि vṛddhi<br>expansion |
|-----------------|-------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
|-----------------|-------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|

These are the simple vowels, in short and long versions.

|   |   |     |         |           |     |
|---|---|-----|---------|-----------|-----|
| अ | a | 1   | (cup)   | short - 1 |     |
| आ | ā | ①   | (far)   | long - 2  | yes |
| इ | i | 2   | (it)    | short - 1 |     |
| ई | ī | 2 ↗ | (eagle) | long - 2  |     |
| उ | u | 5   | (put)   | short - 1 |     |
| ऊ | ū | 5 → | (blue)  | long - 2  |     |

These vowels involve a touch-release, like getting to the end of a lap in swimming.

|   |    |     |             |           |  |
|---|----|-----|-------------|-----------|--|
| ऋ | ṛ  | 3   | (krshna)    | short - 1 |  |
| ॠ | ṝ | 3 ↗ | (pitrrnaam) | long - 2  |  |
| ऌ | ḷ  | 4   | (klrp)      | short - 1 |  |
| ॡ | ḹ | 4 → | (lrlrm)     | long - 2  |  |

These vowels combine 2 simple vowels to create a new, long vowel.

|   |    |           |         |          |     |
|---|----|-----------|---------|----------|-----|
| ए | e  | a 1 → 2 i | (may)   | long - 2 |     |
| ऐ | ai | a 1 - 2 i | (buy)   | long - 2 | yes |
| ओ | o  | a 1 → 5 u | (road)  | long - 2 |     |
| औ | au | a 1 - 5 u | (sound) | long - 2 | yes |



the sanskrit word for **consonant**, व्यञ्जनम् *vyañjanam*, means "mark"

Here, physical touching in the mouth marks a location. A vowel (energy) is needed to pronounce (give life to) a consonant (matter). These particular consonants are called stops, स्पर्श *spṛśṭa* "touched". Categories vary by position, breath, and voice use.

| Position                  | Sound Quality | अल्पप्राण<br>श्वासः<br>Unaspirated<br>unvoiced<br>(clicks)   | महाप्राण<br>श्वासः<br>Aspirated<br>unvoiced | अल्पप्राण<br>- नादः<br>Unaspirated<br>voiced<br>(vibrations) | महाप्राण<br>- नादः<br>Aspirated<br>voiced | अनुनासिक<br>- नादः<br>Nasal<br>(Resonant) |
|---------------------------|---------------|--|---|--|---|---|
|                           |               |  |   |  |   |   |
| १ कण्ठ<br>1 Velar         |               | क<br>ka  | ख<br>kha                                    | ग<br>ga  | घ<br>gha                                  | ङ<br>ṅa<br>(nga)                          |
| २ तालव्य<br>2 Palatal     |               | च<br>ca  | छ<br>cha                                    | ज<br>ja  | झ<br>jha                                  | ञ<br>ña<br>(nya)                          |
| ३ मूर्धन्य<br>3 Retroflex |               | ट<br>ṭa  | ठ<br>ṭha                                    | ड<br>ḍa  | ढ<br>ḍha                                  | ण<br>ṇa                                   |
|                           |               | (no english equivalents - place tongue up in the high notch) |   |  |   |   |
| ४ दन्त्य<br>4 Dental      |               | त<br>ta  | थ<br>tha                                    | द<br>da  | ध<br>dha                                  | न<br>na                                   |
|                           |               | (no english equivalents - place tongue at the top teeth)     |   |  |   |   |
| ५ ओष्ठ्य<br>5 Labial      |               | प<br>pa  | फ<br>pha                                    | ब<br>ba  | भ<br>bha                                  | म<br>ma                                   |



These consonants are not "stopped". These are "lightly touched" इशत्स्पृष्ट ishat spr̥ṣṭa.

They include semi-vowels, which are formed from 2 vowels, and breath sounds (fricatives) which use the projected breath to touch. The 5 positions are the same as before, though there are slight variations in \*mouth usage\*, as described below.

| Position  | २ तालव्य<br>2 Palatal | ३ मूर्धन्य<br>3 Retroflex | ४ दन्त्य<br>4 Dental | ५ दन्तोष्ठ्य<br>5 Dento-labial |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|
|   |                       |                           |                      |                                |
| अन्तस्थ<br>antastha<br>"stand between"<br>Semi-vowels | य<br>ya               | र<br>ra                   | ल<br>la              | व<br>va                        |
| उष्मन्<br>uṣman<br>"heat, warmth"<br>Fricatives       | श<br>śa               | ष<br>ṣa                   | स<br>sa              | ह<br>ha                        |
|   |                       |                           |                      | 1 Glottal                      |

The top row are semi-vowels, where 2 vowels are combined to create a consonant. In contrast to the long vowels, the movement, or order of combination, is against the outflow of breath to the mouth. This backward movement creates a slight touching:

(i+a = ya) is position 2 (i) moving back to position 1 (a)  
 (r+a = ra) is position 3 (r) moving back to position 1 (a)  
 (l+a = la) is position 4 (l) moving back to position 1 (a)  
 (u+a = va) is position 5 (u) moving back to position 1 (a)

Recall, in contrast  
 (a+i = e) and (a+u = o)  
 combine toward out-the-mouth, creating a long vowel, at 2 positions.

In the case of व "va", it is sometimes heard as "wa", closely representing (u+a = wa). "wa" is a weaker sound, easier to say following a consonant: "twam" (you), for example. In classical sanskrit, व is defined as a \*dentolabial\* = "va", using the bottom teeth against the top lip. "va" has more strength for beginning words like "veda" (knowledge). Learn the idea of a semi-vowel, and have व be a dynamic, in-real-time sound, in relationship to other sounds, not a fixed-forever-in-time written letter.

Finally, the breath sounds, called "uṣman" (warmth) in sanskrit, are fricatives (like friction) in English. The last one, ह "ha", is at position 1, and though it keeps the same position name in sanskrit (kaṇṭhya = at the throat), it is called a \*glottal\* in English rather than a velar. It uses the glottis unlike previous sounds at position 1.

# अं and अः - "tone-closing" sounds, shown using dots

These two special consonants are sometimes used within a word, but more frequently are used as the final, ending sound of a word.

Here they are each shown with the most basic tone, अ (a). Know that they can be used after any tone (vowel) - closing the tone in different ways.

अं

an̐/añ̐/an̐/an̐/am̐

Positions 1/2/3/4/5

is named अनुस्वारः **anusvārah** = "a connecting sound".

It represents a closing of any vowel with resonance. This resonant value changes, anticipating the following consonant. For more information on this, see page 15.

For now,  
as it most commonly ends a word, the value chosen for singing the alphabet is at position 5 - "am̐"

अः

ah̐

1 Glottal

is named विसर्गः **visargah** = "a sending forth".

In this case, it is the breath that is sent forth. It represents the addition of breath to close a vowel.

Again, it can be used following any vowel.

It is the other sound at position 1 that english grammarians call glottal rather than velar, due to its use of the glottis rather than the velum. To make it simpler, think of all position 1 sounds as coming up the throat.

---

Anusvārah and visargah can each occur following any vowel sound.

In the script used for modern sanskrit, all consonants are written in their neutral form to include the vowel sound अ (a). Thus क is "ka", कं is "kam̐", कः is "kah̐"

Practice saying these 2 closing sounds with different characters preceding them:

इं उं कं तं लं वं रं यं हं ओं

उः इः एः ऐः कः गः तः पः बः (answers on p 30)

अ  
a

आ  
ā

इ  
i

ई  
ī

उ  
u

ऊ  
ū

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# IMPORTANT DISTINCTIONS - detailed view of the ring of sounds

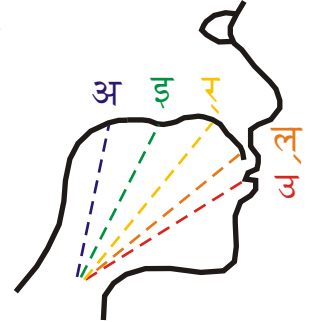
विवेकज्ञानम् viveka (distinction, discrimination) jñānam (knowledge, proficiency)  
 "viveka-jñānam" = proficiency at distinguishing difference, faculty of discrimination

## 1 - Separate 5 unique mouth postitions -

**Exercise 1:** Use simple \*tones\* to shine sound at each position.

अ इ र ल उ  
 a i r l u

\* [Because ऋ and ॠ, the actual tones or vowels, use a touch-release, choose the semi-vowels without the "a" at the end. र (r) is the semi-vowel र (ra) without its "a" ] \*



### Exercise 2:

Feel a continuous spectrum of tone energy, spanning all 5 postions. Feel this both in the palate and the rest of the head & brain.

आआआआआ ईईईईई ररररररर ललललललल ऊऊऊऊऊ  
 aaaaaaaaaa-iiiiiii-rrrrrrr-lllllll-uuuuuuuu



**Exercise 3:** Feel the 5 unique marks created by the 5 clicking, unaspirated consonants. Feel the touching of the tongue or lips at the same positions shone upon by the tones above.

क च ट त प  
 ka ca ta ta pa

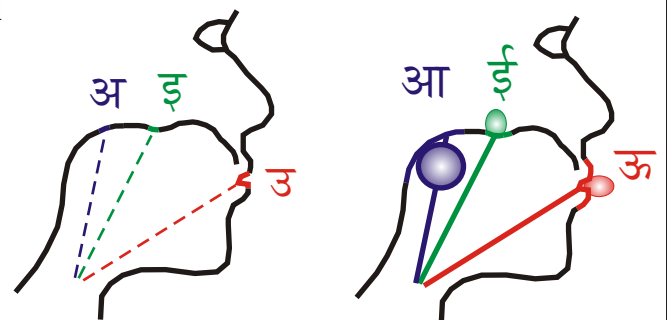


## 2 - Short and long tones (vowels) -

Short tones are like clicking a flashlight on and then off immediately. Long tones are like turning it on and shining it through.

**Exercise:** Chant the first line of the alphabet repeatedly, clipping the short tones and allowing the long tones to sustain the position.

अ आ इ ई उ ऊ  
 a ā i ī u ū



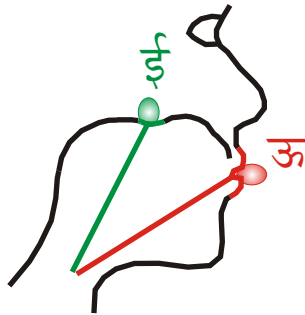
### 3 - Expanded tones among long tones -

All long tones extend longer in time than do the short tones. Expanded tones are additionally more powerful due to the amplification created by opening the mouth more widely. I call these "eye-popping", as their energy shines even behind the eyeballs.

#### Long single position tones

(not expanded)

ई (i) and ऊ (u), [and the seldom used ऋ (r̄) and ॠ (ī)], are long tones that extend at a single position, shining through at that position.



ई = ई  
ऊ = उ →

ई and ऊ intensify a single position.

**Exercise 1:** chant ई and ऊ, feeling sustained vibration at a single position.

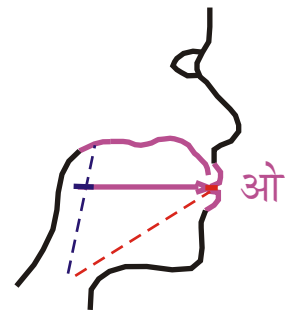
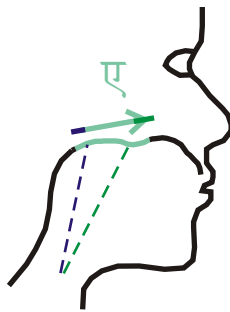
#### Long dual position tones

(not expanded)

ए (e) and ओ (o) are long tones, spanning across two positions, like a moving light beam shining across the palate.

अ → ई = ए

अ → उ = ओ



ए and ओ are direct routes across 2 positions.

**Exercise 2:** chant ए and ओ, each time feeling the vibration move in your palate.

#### Exercise 3:

chant (a e) अ ए . अ ए . अ ए - feel, at अ, your mouth in position to begin ए

chant (e i) ए इ . ए इ . ए इ - feel, after ए, your mouth is at इ

chant (a e i) अ ए इ . अ ए इ . अ ए इ - feel ए connect अ to इ

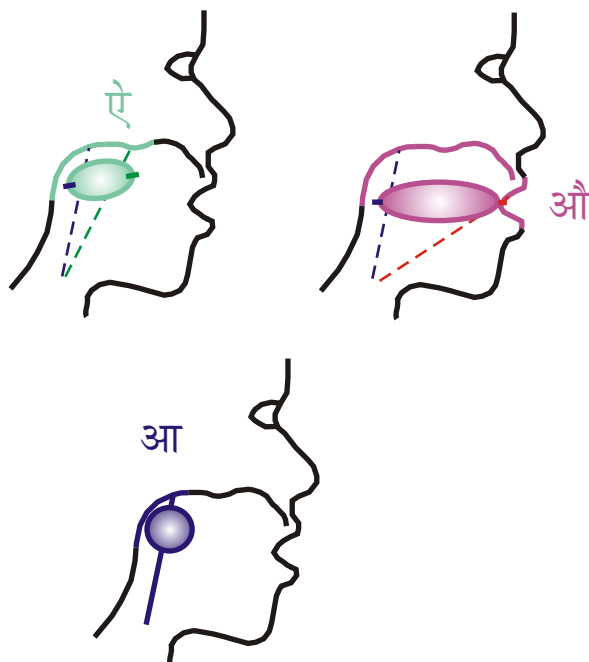
chant (a o) अ ओ . अ ओ . अ ओ - feel, at अ, your mouth in position to begin ओ

chant (o u) ओ उ . ओ उ . ओ उ - feel, after ओ, your mouth is at उ

chant (a o u) अ ओ उ . अ ओ उ . अ ओ उ - feel ओ connect अ to उ

## EXPANDED tones

ऐ (ai) and औ (au) are long tones that are EXPANDED routes spanning 2 positions. The mouth opens more widely than in the previous long tones, creating more amplified sounds.



ऐ = अ इ  
औ = अ उ

ऐ and औ are EXPANDED routes across 2 positions.

The third EXPANDED sound is आ (ā), unique among long tones. It is actually the force behind the other expanded tones, as we will see in lesson 2.

आ is an EXPANSION and intensification at a single position.

### Exercise 4:

chant (a ai) अ ऐ . अ ऐ . अ ऐ - feel, at अ , your mouth in position to begin ऐ

chant (ai i) ऐ इ . ऐ इ . ऐ इ - feel, after ऐ , your mouth is at इ

chant (a ai i) अ ऐ इ . अ ऐ इ . अ ऐ इ - feel ऐ connect अ to इ

chant (a au) अ औ . अ औ . अ औ - feel, at अ , your mouth in position to begin औ

chant (au u) औ उ . औ उ . औ उ - feel, after औ , your mouth is at उ

chant (a au u) अ औ उ . अ औ उ . अ औ उ - feel औ connect अ to उ

**Exercise 5:** this exercise is to clearly distinguish the expanded tones. They require opening the mouth wider - resulting in a more amplified and powerful sound. While learning these sounds, close your eyes and exaggerate their "eye-popping" quality to fully enjoy the differences. Refer to the previous pictures on page 12 and above.

chant (a ā) अ आ . अ आ . अ आ notice the position, then expansion around it

chant (e ai) ए ऐ . ए ऐ . ए ऐ notice straight route, then expanded route

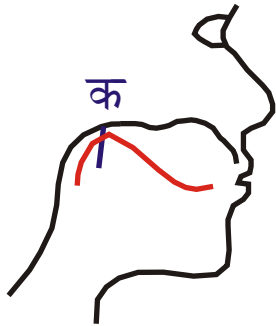
chant (o au) ओ औ . ओ औ . ओ औ notice straight route, then expanded route

**Exercise 6:** Chant the first 2 lines of the alphabet, focusing on the different sensations:

chant अ आ इ ई उ ऊ a ā i ī u ū  
ए ऐ ओ औ e ai o au

This exercise can be fun - notice tones being made & intensified at 3 positions - like 3 stars, each created in a sky and then brightened. Then connect the stars - by a straight line like a comet, then by an expansion - like an explosion. Refer to pictures on p. 11-13.

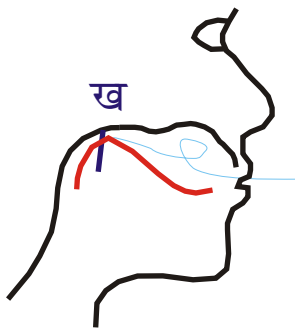
## 5 - Little and big breath with touched marks (stopped consonants) -



Unaspirated marks, such as क, use less breath than we are accustomed to using. Aspirated marks, such as ख (kha), use slightly more than we are accustomed. Mouth, tongue position, and voice use are the same - only breath use differs.

**Exercise 1:** hold your hand in front of your mouth as you pronounce क (little or no breath reaches your hand). Now pronounce ख (breath clearly reaches your hand).

**Exercise 2:** use क to make several marks in the palate. Then, from that mark, "jump off" with the breath - ख.



क क क क क क क क क - ख  
ka ka ka ka ka ka ka ka ka - kha

**Exercise 3:** You can make dozens of क with one breath. You can make considerably fewer ख in one breath.

## 5 - Tones are about length, marks are about breath -

One tendency, in learning, can be to lengthen the tone when attempting to add breath to a mark (consonant). This exercise helps correct this common learning step.

अ अ क ख  
a a ka kha

Say all four of these sounds and notice the tone is the same.

आ आ का खा  
ā ā kā khā

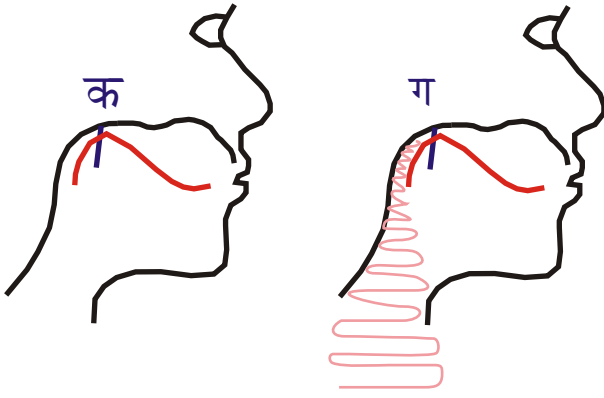
As lesson 2 will describe, the addition of an extra vertical line after a consonant indicates the use of the long tone, आ. Try this line, keeping the same long tone.

## 6 - Voice use with stopped marks -

Keeping the breath the same, now feel the difference in voice use. Some marks are fast clicks, some have a build up of vibration in the throat/vocal cords.

**Exercise 1:** Use the marks क (ka) and ग (ga) to exaggerate the difference between "clicks" (unvoiced) and "vibrates" (voiced). With ग, exaggerate the voice use initially - allow your throat to build up like a bullfrog before releasing the sound.





**Exercise 2:** Use your thumbs to close off your ears. Try several of each:

क क क क क क क - notice fast clicks  
ग ग ग ग ग ग ग - notice vibration thru the throat and ears

## 7 - Resonate at 5 different positions to understand अनुस्वारः **anusvārah** -

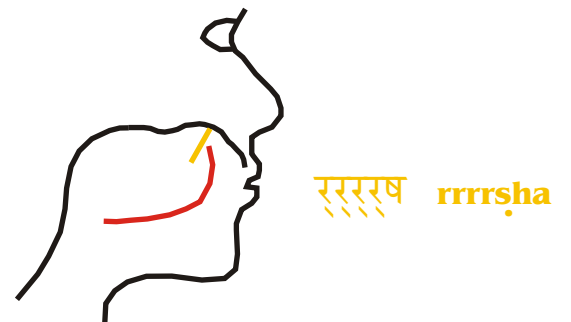
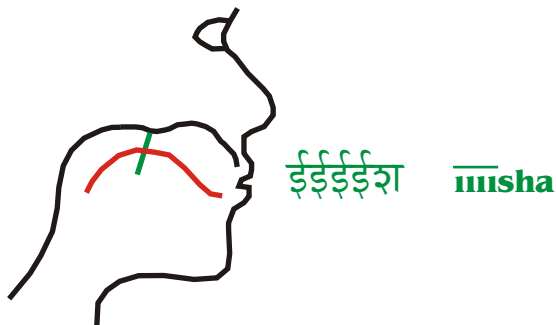
The symbol for **anusvārah** is constant - a dot above the top bar. Its value changes, representing one of the five different resonant sounds, and depends upon the immediate following consonant:

### POSITIONS

|   |               |               |                   |                     |                    |
|---|---------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1 = ṅ, back of tongue<br>(like "ng")      | आङ्<br>āṅ     | गंगा<br>gaṅgā | सिंह<br>sinha     | संख्या<br>saṅkhyā   | सत्संग<br>satsaṅga |
| 2 = ñ, broad middle tongue<br>(like "ny") | ईञ्<br>īṇa    | पञ्च<br>pañca | संयम<br>sañyama   | संजय<br>sañjaya     | संशय<br>sañshaya   |
| 3 = ṇ, tip of tongue<br>in notch          | रण्<br>raṇ    | दण्ड<br>daṇḍa | कण्ठ<br>kaṇṭha    |                     |                    |
| 4 = n, tip of tongue<br>at top teeth      | ल्लन्<br>llaṇ | बंध<br>bandha | संतोष<br>santoshā | संस्कार<br>saṇskāra | अहिंसा<br>ahinśā   |
| 5 = m, resonate at lips                   | ऊम्<br>ūm     | अंबा<br>ambā  | संपत्<br>saṃpat   | संवेदन<br>saṃvedana | कुंभक<br>kum̐bhaka |

## 8 - Tongue position distinguishes the similar fricatives -

Use the sustained tone at each position to lock in the correct **tongue** position. Then blow breath over that tongue shape. Notice clearly different feelings.



9 - Positions 3 and 4 are new positions for native English speakers -

Use your **tongue** to identify the positions clearly. Distinguishing position 3 from 4 can be challenging because english uses a position in between them (like a position 3½). Transliteration also makes the sounds seem more similar than they actually are.

**Exercise 1:**

chant ट ट ट ट ट ट ट ट ट त त त त त त त त त  
ta ... ta...



Notice with repetition, it becomes clearer that ट is a different sound than त .

They both involve the tip of the tongue, as shown in their similar characters, and are more similar than they are with क (ka) or च (ca). However,

ट is necessarily louder due to its position in the "highest place" in the palate - creating more space for amplification, as in a church steeple or a canyon echo.

त is a more sublime experience, softer and more intimate at the teeth.

This mention of the similarity in drawing the characters used to visual approximate the felt-sense of ट and त , both showing the tip of the tongue, leads us to the next part - recognizing the characters of the written script.

# Sanskrit's font: देवनागरी devanāgarī (divine in the city)

नागरी nāgarī - adj. - civic, relating to a town, town-bred

देव deva - adj. - divine, shining

devanāgarī - Divine and relating to a town. The name for written sanskrit.

The idea here is that written language is used in larger groups of settled people, where standardization and more guidelines are required - in towns. Written characters are chosen to represent sounds that are used in the oral traditions.

It is important, though, to remember that the sounds (energies) come first. The written characters, or letters, are only visual approximations of spoken language. In fact, sanskrit has been written in many different fonts, with devanāgarī being the recent choice. It is also worth noting that sanskrit has been traditionally a "high" language used for chanting by priests or wizards - not a language in common writing for the common town folk. Sanskrit has been a specialized language that has passed through the generations of exceptionally learned people. Its study has required the sung memorization of vast information, perhaps more information than we can comprehend. And importantly, the process of memorizing this information has been like repeatedly - daily, yearly - doing yoga postures or meditation. The process of the oral tradition has changed the brains of those studying sanskrit - created a "sanskrit operating system".

The primary power of language is in the making of its sounds. Singing and chanting and language for one's own enjoyment of sound - not just survival. Music is the universal language of God. And one's own personal voice is the most healing instrument possible - for its tones resonate deepest within, and affect one's breath most directly.

So my point is this: learn the font, learn to read and write - but **REMEMBER TO CHANT, TO SING, TO FEEL** - for it is in the making of the sounds that you will be guided deeper within. It is the making of the sounds that offers divine experience - all else is to inspire that. Just as yoga postures are mostly a practice (with some theory), sanskrit is a practice.

Remember to chant - at whatever level of sanskrit you choose - learning texts like the Yoga Sutras or the Bhagavad Gita; chanting an invocation; chating om; or, even no sanskrit - just using the feeling of mouth positions to enjoy making sounds in any language.

## Letters as visual symbols of sounds

My understanding of the idea of a letter is that it was to visually represent a felt-sense of what happens in the mouth, breath and body when we make a sound. Fonts have changed in response to writing (and now typing) systems. Originally, they were pictures representing sounds, which were chosen for energies (tones or vowels) and matter (marks or consonants). Extrapolated to the idea of words, there was never supposed to be spelling. One wrote a picture of the sounds one made.

There is no "spelling" in sanskrit - one writes the sounds as they are. The necessity of learning to spell seems a sign of the de-evolution of language, not a progressive step.

So if you, too, wondered why we had to learn to spell words like "learn", welcome to a language where that will never be required. And, should you choose to continue, the rest of sanskrit's grammar is similarly constructed - with a felt-sense to its logic, as yoga postures have, and a precision to its rules, like mathematics.

Here are the written characters - remember to **sing them** and **feel them** as you write them!

Sanskrit is read top-to-bottom and left-to-right, as English is. Writing the characters is usually also done in this order. Here is a step-by-step guide to writing, with descriptions on pages 23-24. In addition are the **names of the categories** of sounds.

**Sing** and **feel** the letter each time you write it - develop your own felt-sense of the picture.

स्वरः svarah "tone"

अ

आ

इ

ई

उ

ऊ

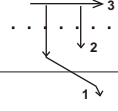
ऋ

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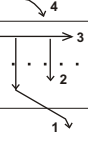
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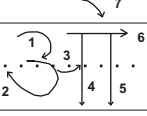
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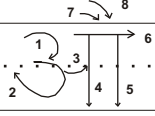
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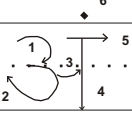
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व्यञ्जनम् vyañjanam  
"mark"

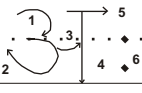
अनुस्वारः anusvārah  
"connecting sound"

अं



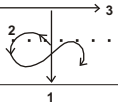
विसर्गः visargah  
"a sending forth"

अः

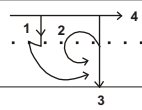


स्पृष्ट sprshta "touched" कण्ठ्य kanṭhya "at the throat"

क



ख



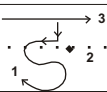
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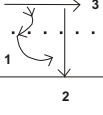
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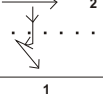
म



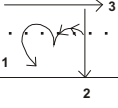
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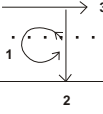
र



ल

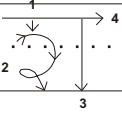


व

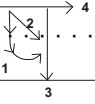


उष्मन् uṣhman  
"warmth"

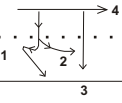
श



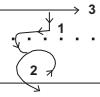
ष



स



ह



# Letters as visual approximations of sounds

These notations relate my experiences of the visual letters with my felt sense of the sounds they are chosen to represent. Any visual representation would be imperfect. In some cases, my examples may seem inconsistent - these are only thoughts that assisted me in learning to recognize the characters. I encourage you to use them only as they seem useful.

---

- अ - notice the mouth and a vertical line (vertical line is the simplest mark for the simplest vowel) - sound going straight up the throat
- आ - notice 2 vertical lines - 2 beats, twice as long and strong as अ
- इ - chant अ then इ, tongue position is drawn at bottom of इ (bunched in back, tip down)
- ई - chant इ then ई, notice vibration last longer and travel up into the head
- उ - notice the mouth or lips, where the tone comes out
- ऊ - chant उ then ऊ, notice vibration last longer and extend out horizontally thru the lips
- ए - notice 2 lines for 2 positions combined (a + i) and connected by the straight route (one streamer hanging below the character)
- ऐ - combines 2 positions by the expanded route (2 streamers - one above and one below)
- ओ - notice 2 lines for 2 positions combined, this time (a + the lips उ u), and connected by the straight route (one streamer above the character)
- औ - same as above, connecting by the expanded route (2 streamers above)
- ऋ - notice the loop (quick touch-return of the tongue), and the hook (tip of tongue used)
- ॠ - notice 2 hooks - twice the above
- ऌ - for now, notice the hook for the tip of the tongue (see later dental letters for more)
- 

- अं - dot above bar = sound vibrating up in the head, compare to:
- अः - dots after the character = sound, or breath released out - like seeing breath droplets leave the mouth on a cold morning - compare with above
- 

- क - notice a bunched up tongue, a bubble trapped behind a vertical line - a clipped sound
- ख - notice the bubble from above has been sent forth - breath is released
- ग - notice the first part is a drop down - dropping straight down the throat from position 1
- घ - like above, but blown up as a bubble is inflated - breath is released
- ङ - the "stickiest" of the resonant sounds leaves a dot behind after the tongue separates
- च - notice a bunched up character reading left-to-right, as the tongue is bunched up
-

छ - similar to above, but puffed up and with a bubble - breath released

ज - similar to च, but pointed the opposite way against the direction of reading, (making it slower), because it requires dropping down into the throat like ग

झ - the recycled tongue position shown (from झ) with something released (breath)

ञ - notice the similar bunched up character as च and ज

---

ट - notice the simple tip of the tongue just like in the drawing of position 3

ठ - notice the tip of the tongue, a bubble rolled out (breath released or rolled out)

ड - notice the tip of the tongue, now against the direction of reading (dropping down into the throat is slower)

ढ - notice the bubble as 2 spots above

ण - notice the tip of the tongue stays hooked ण in position, longer than ट

---

त - notice the tip of the tongue pointing at a different position (teeth)

थ - notice the bubble, and the break in the top bar - always meaning breath released

द - notice the tip of the tongue, this time with a character (like ड ढ) representing a drop back or down into the throat

ध - notice a similar puff up as घ, breath released, and the break in the top bar

न - notice the tip of the tongue extended straight and lightly against the teeth ण

---

प - notice a quick, closed character (closed lips)

फ - like above with something continued, as उ to ऊ, except here, breath is released

ब - notice a closed character with something happening between (chant प ब, the diagonal line represents the vibration occurring inside the mouth due to voice use)

भ - notice a bubble, and the break in the top bar

म - notice the fullest closed character

---

य - character has a bunch in it, as others at its position, a going back before going forward

र - the quickest character - the tongue tip darts to position 3

ल - notice the similarity to त but with something happening in the middle of the tongue

व - notice a quick, closed character (closed lips)

---

श - notice the same tongue position is drawn as झ

ष - notice the diagonal line representing the tongue that blocks the air

स - notice breath extended horizontally ण

ह - the bubble of breath

## Fun Puzzles - Reading Simple Words

Read each word, one letter at a time. Then read the word all together. Then write it.

example: आसनं ā sa nam āsanam आसनं (answers p. 27)

अघल

अभय

आगत

इतर

ईरण

ईरणः

ईशः

उखः

उदरं

उभय

उपकरणं

उमः

ऊन

ऊषः

ऋत

ऋषभः

ऋ

एजक

एडकः

एव

ऐकघं

ओमन

ओघः

औदक

औपस

कंसः

कटः

कणः

कनकं

कफः

खडः

गजः

गत

गहन

घसः

चर

छदनं

जनकः

जपः

जलं

झरः

झषः

तपः

दद

दध

दलं

दहन

धनं

नभस

नमः

नव

पथ

फलं

बकः

बलं

भव

मठर

मनसः

मशकः

यमः

रमः

रसः

लयः

वचस

शमः

शयः

शतक

शबरः

सकल

सजल

सतत

सदय

संजय

संयमः

सरस

सह

हठः

हलः

हसः

# Fun Puzzles - Transliterations and Definitions

**These "answers" are transliterations. Soon you won't need these english characters! The dictionary I recommend is The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary by Apte, published by Rinsen Book Company in Japan, ISBN 4-653-00038-7.**

| आसनं   | āsanam     | - n. - | a particular posture, a mode of sitting |
|--------|------------|--------|---|
| अघल    | aghala     | -      | destroying sin                          |
| अभय    | abhaya     | -      | free from fear                          |
| आगत    | āgata      | -      | arrived, obtained                       |
| इतर    | itara      | -      | other                                   |
| ईरण    | īraṇa      | -      | agitating, driving                      |
| ईरणः   | īraṇaḥ     | -      | the wind                                |
| ईशः    | īśaḥ       | -      | a lord, master                          |
| उखः    | ukhaḥ      | -      | a boiler, pot                           |
| उदरं   | udaram     | -      | the belly                               |
| उभय    | ubhaya     | -      | both                                    |
| उपकरणं | upakaraṇam | -      | doing service, helping, assisting       |
| उमः    | umaḥ       | -      | town, wharf                             |
| ऊन     | ūna        | -      | wanting, deficient, less than           |
| ऊषः    | ūṣaḥ       | -      | salty ground                            |
| ऋत     | ṛta        | -      | proper, true, right                     |
| ऋषभः   | ṛṣabhah    | -      | a bull, the best, the most excellent    |
| ऋ      | ṛ          | -      | to go (one of many verbs meaning to go) |
| एजक    | ejaka      | -      | shaking                                 |
| एडकः   | edaḥ       | -      | a ram, wild goat                        |
| एव     | eva        | -      | only, just, quite                       |
| ऐकघं   | aikagham   | -      | at once, together                       |
| ओमन    | omana      | -      | protection, favor, kindness             |
| ओघः    | oghah      | -      | flood, current, inundation, multitude   |
| औदक    | audaka     | -      | aquatic, watery, relating to water      |



|      |          |  |
|------|----------|--|
| औपस  | aupasa   | - relating to dawn, early                              |
| कंसः | kansaḥ   | - cup, goblet  |
| कटः  | kataḥ    | - the hip, groin                                       |
| कणः  | kaṇaḥ    | - a grain, single seed, atom, particle                 |
| कनकं | kanakam  | - gold   |
| कफः  | kaphaḥ   | - phlegm, one of the 3 body humors with vata and pitta |
| खडः  | khaḍaḥ   | - breaking, dividing                                   |
| गजः  | gajaḥ    | - elephant   |
| गत   | gata     | - gone   |
| गहन  | gahana   | - deep, thick, dense                                   |
| घसः  | ghasaḥ   | - eater, devourer                                      |
| चर   | cara     | - moving, walking                                      |
| छदनं | chadanam | - covering   |
| जनकः | janakaḥ  | - father   |
| जपः  | japaḥ    | - a softly spoken prayer                               |
| जलं  | jalam    | - water  |
| झरः  | jharāḥ   | - waterfall, cascade                                   |
| झषः  | jhaṣaḥ   | - fish   |
| तपः  | tapāḥ    | - heat, fire   |
| दद   | dada     | - giving, offering                                     |
| दध   | dadha    | - holding, possessing                                  |
| दलं  | dalam    | - portion, piece                                       |
| दहन  | dahana   | - burning, consuming by fire                           |
| धनं  | dhanam   | - wealth, money, property                              |
| नभस  | nabhasa  | - vapory, misty  |
| नमः  | namaḥ    | - salutation   |
| नव   | nava     | - new  |

|       |          |   |
|-------|----------|---|
| पथ    | patha    | - path, road  |
| फलं   | phalam   | - fruit, result   |
| बकः   | bakah    | - crane   |
| बलं   | balam    | - strength, might   |
| भव    | bhava    | - arising from  |
| मठर   | mathara  | - intoxicated   |
| मनसः  | manasaḥ  | - of the mind   |
| मशकः  | mashakah | - mosquito  |
| यमः   | yamaḥ    | - restraining, self-control, great moral observance                               |
| रमः   | ramah    | - joy, delight, a lover   |
| रसः   | rasah    | - sap, juice, liquid, taste   |
| लयः   | layah    | - sticking, union, absorption (of the mind)                                       |
| वचस   | vacasa   | - talkative, eloquent, wise   |
| शमः   | shamah   | - quiet, calmness   |
| शयः   | shayah   | - sleep   |
| शतक   | shataka  | - a hundred   |
| शबरः  | shabarah | - mountaineer, wild man   |
| सकल   | sakala   | - whole, entire, with all its pieces  |
| सजल   | sajala   | - watery, (with water)  |
| सतत   | satata   | - constant, eternal   |
| सदय   | sadaya   | - kind, tender  |
| संजय  | sañjaya  | - conquest, victory   |
| संयमः | sañyamah | - full restraint, concentration of the mind, the final 3 limbs of ashtangayoga    |
| सरस   | sarasa   | - tasty, juicy  |
| सह    | saha     | - with  |
| हठः   | hathah   | - force, obstinacy, absolute necessity, a kind of yoga practice that is difficult |
| हलः   | halah    | - plow  |
| हसः   | hasah    | - laughter (a fitting end to these lesson 1 puzzles)                              |

## How to practice संस्कृतम्

Like all else in yoga, sanskrit will be a practice. I recommend either adding or substituting a few minutes to your regular yoga practice time - whether it be postures, breathing, chanting, meditation, etc.

The singing of the "ring of sounds" is a fun practice that can be done anywhere. Children especially love to learn it, and can help us remember to be open to new experiences. It is this quality that hopefully all of our yogic practices cultivate - openness to "what is", which is ever-new and ever-changing.

In addition to enjoying chanting, I recommend setting aside study times, as one might for college courses. Three times a week for an hour is a great commitment, and is certain to reward you with rapid progress.

One cannot spend too much time mastering this first lesson. All of yoga is based on firmly establishing a foundation level before exploring a next level. Play with the sounds of the alphabet and make them yours! Write the characters and see how you can make them yours!

For learning calligraphy, I recommend going to an art store and getting Copic pens or something similar, and a big writing tablet - like 24 x 36 inches. Make big colorful letters and enjoy your own way of finding them.

When you know the characters of the script, you will be **ready for course 2**, where we will look at reading marks (consonants) with tones (vowels) other than "a", compound consonants (which are fun puzzles by themselves!), and begin learning about euphonic sound blending. After that, you will be able to read all words! That includes reading and **pronouncing yoga posture names and philosophical terms**.

Finally, it is so supportive to find a study partner. As it is a language, it can be useful to hear other people making the sounds as well. I have had the same partner for years now, and we have each found that the sanskrit study has carried over into the other aspects of our lives - bringing focus, organization, and a general sense of being a kid again - having fun.

It is not likely that I or you will become a sanskrit scholar. But we can all learn from its precision, refined beauty, and felt sense of being true. And even a small amount can allow a personal relationship to the great texts of yoga. I recommend getting a copy of the Yoga Sutras and the Bhagavad Gita, as two texts to read and play with for introductions to sanskrit literature.

I welcome your feedback - especially what you loved, stories of how it has touched your life, and ways you hope to spread the teachings.

a A i I u U ... Pierre

## "answers" or transliterations from page 8

- practice in reading anusvarah and visargah

(इ im) (उं um) (कं kam) (तं tam) (लं lam) (वं vam) (रं ram) (यं yam) (हं ham) (ओं om)  
(उः uh) (इः ih) (एः eh) (ऐः aih) (कः kah) (गः gah) (तः tah) (पः pah) (बः vah)

## Sanskrit grammar from within - on its terms

Gradually, in learning sanskrit, we begin to think in sanskrit - rather than trying to "download" sanskrit with our english "operating system". This requires letting go of control and allowing our brains to try on a different program. In this case, it can be a wonderful experience, as sanskrit is a smoother, more organized program. And the process of learning might even help shed light upon our english program.

संस्कृतम् *sanskṛtam* means "well-made". Its foundation is built upon feeling 5 distinct, resonant positions in the mouth. At the very onset, it is designed to offer inner experience - these positions and their varied experiences. This felt sense learning system is a process unique for each individual, as we each have a slightly different anatomy, and yet scientifically described that all may find a similar experience. At this very beginning, sanskrit encourages us to make sounds for our own benefit. Sound for me.

We talk most often, because we need to communicate. But we can also sing because we have a song. How much do you make sounds just trying to survive - negotiating with others? How much do you make sounds in play, or to celebrate the Divine within, or just spontaneously? Do you share these sounds with others?

If the goal of a human life is to experience joy, contentment, happiness - a felt-sense of God within us and all around us - संस्कृतम् is designed to help us.

There are many a famous and powerful मन्त्रः *mantrah* "sacred hymn, prayer, spell" in sanskrit. Of these, the वर्णमाला *varṇamālā* "ring of sounds, alphabet" is the first and among the most powerful.

वर्ण *varṇa* = "color, class, tribe, energy, letter, sound"

माला *mālā* = "garland, succession, ring, collection"

This वर्णमाला is organized intentionally. The tones (vowels) come first: single position, touch-released, then dual position. Next are marks (consonants) - organized by position, breath and voice use. The final sound, ह *ha*, connects by position 1 to अ *a*, thus the "ring of sounds". Ha! Chanting the वर्णमाला is a practice. It creates organizing effects in the brain. Compare this to the (lack of) organization in the english alphabet, and notice the potential offered by trying on some sanskrit programming.

You could rest here, chanting the वर्णमाला and have a powerful and fun sanskrit daily practice. Try singing it three times every day before meditation; or, as a purifying practice before something like a work meeting - a meeting that might otherwise create anxiety or disturb the freedom of your mind. And if you sing near your co-workers, you might lighten up the whole pre-meeting vibe!

I have found that this वर्णमाला helps me learn about my sounds and helps me to have more confidence in singing in any language. I previously felt awkward even singing in english. Now, should my mind start to wander into doubt about pitch or melody, should I start to wonder about the opinions of others outside me, I have an interiorizing practice: feel sounds at mouth positions and enjoy them, for me!

As you continue in sanskrit and yoga, try these steps:

- 1) learn the sanskrit terms from the देवनागरी devanāgarī and enjoy pronouncing them
- 2) create sanskrit root-based translations. For example notice how "ring of sounds" offers more meaning than "alphabet"; "tones" more felt-sense than "vowels"
- 3) use the learning process to organize english sounds - providing a practice for enjoying english songs and chants as well, and find ways to make english simpler.

Sanskrit is as close to the proto-indo-european language as we have. It is as close to the source of english as we have. For understanding our own language, it is at least as relevant as latin (which is closer to sanskrit and also is used as a "spiritual" language).

5 positions where resonant sounds can be clearly felt inside the mouth:

1 - कण्ठ्य kaṇṭhya - "at the throat"

2 - तालव्य tālavya - "at the palate"

3 - मूर्धन्य mūrdhanya - "at the highest part"

4 - दन्त्य dantya - "at the teeth"

5 - ओष्ठ्य oṣṭhya - "at the lips" at this position we also have the term

दन्तोष्ठ्य dantoṣṭhya - dentolabial or "at the teeth and lips " where  
the bottom teeth help the bottom lip to pronounce व va

Notice this is simpler than the different english grammatical terms used to describe the various sounds. Position 1 can be called velar or glottal, or guttural for example.

At these 5 positions, the first kinds of sounds we learn are the

स्वरः svarah "note, tone" - the vowels. These teach us the 5 positions, and also about  
मात्रा mātrā or "measure".

One मात्रा = the length of a short tone, two = the length of a long tone (or 2 short).

So the tones or notes (vowels) teach us about position - like a flute has separate holes. In addition they teach us about measure or tone length - a concept not usually even addressed in common english grammar study. These short and long tones are like quarter and half notes in music, or like the 0 and 1 of digital code. Measure difference is part of what allows for the memorization of a large amount of information.

In addition, the tones teach us about

वृद्धि vṛddhi "growth, increase, expansion". There are 3 powerful tones that have this:

आ a, ऐ ai, औ au . These sounds offer a whole new category for distinctions in sounds - amplification - again, as we have in music. These sounds are powerful - like playing the piano more fervently - feel free to add some energy!

Next we learn about

व्यञ्जनम् vyañjanam "making clear, indicating, a mark" (consonant)

Again, the word "mark" matches our felt-sense experience of a mark being made by physical contact of 2 parts within the mouth.

The first kind of marks we learn are:

स्पृष्ट spr̥ṣṭa "touched" (stops). On page 6, there were names for 5 categories of these:

|               |  |   |  |   |   |
|---------------|--|---|--|---|---|
| Sound Quality | अल्पप्राण<br>श्वासः<br>Unaspirated<br>unvoiced<br>(clicks) | महाप्राण<br>श्वासः<br>Aspirated<br>unvoiced | अल्पप्राण<br>- नादः<br>Unaspirated<br>voiced<br>..... (vibrations) ..... | महाप्राण<br>- नादः<br>Aspirated<br>voiced | अनुनासिक<br>- नादः<br>Nasal<br>(Resonant) |
|               | क<br>ka  | ख<br>kha                                    | ग<br>ga  | घ<br>gha                                  | ङ<br>ṅa<br>(nga)                          |

One primary distinction is between marks made by -

|   |  |
|---|--|
| श्वासः shvāsah - "aspiration"<br>(I have called these "clicks") | नादः nādah - "sound" or "vibration",<br>(felt in our throat and vocal cords) |
|---|--|

Sanskrit grammar is encouraging us to feel how columns 3, 4, and 5 are all "vibrated" deeper in the body. I have used the unsophisticated term "vibrations" (as compared to "clicks") to help with an english sense of the grammar.

1 अल्पप्राणश्वासः alpa-prāṇa-shvāsah "slight-breath aspiration"

अल्प alpa "slight, little, insignificant" प्राण prāṇa "breath"

2 महाप्राणश्वासः mahā-prāṇa-shvāsah "strong-breath aspiration"

महा mahā "great, long, strong"

3 अल्पप्राणनादः alpa-prāṇa-nādah "slight-breath-vibration"

4 महाप्राणनादः mahā-prāṇa-nādah "strong-breath-vibration"

5 अनुनासिकनादः anunāsika-nādah "with the nose-vibration"

अनुनासिक anunāsika "with the nose"

The second distinction is in breath use. Columns 1 and 3 are alpa prāṇa = insignificant or slight breath. Columns 2 and 4 are mahā prāṇa = strong breath. These terms are quite similar to the english terms. However, "slight or insignificant breath" is more realistic than "unaspirated", especially as column 1 is a shvāsah - aspiration. English grammar loses this. Finally, column 5 is very similar to the english: "with-nose" = anu-ñāsika.

The next class of marks we learn are called:

अन्तस्थ antastha "stand between" (semi vowels).

These unique sounds are composed by combining 2 vowels. The term "stand between" can refer to them being neither just marks (consonants) nor tones (vowels) - they stand between, with elements of each. They are both slightly touched, and can sustain tone for a long time.

Also, "stand between" references their unique metaphysical position: If vowels are like energy (tones) and consonants are like matter (marks), then we have the duality of metaphysics. Energy and matter, or spirit (soul) and nature (body).

योग: yogah "union", is the science of uniting this dual nature. We have a physical body and a soul. When we remember we are the soul, we cannot be tormented by the ever-changing nature of the body on this material plane.

In the anatomy of yoga, there are several layers of the body described. We progress inward from the skin, muscles, bones (physical body), toward the spinal cord and brain, tracking more and more subtle experiences as we go deeper within our own central channel. As we progress past the deepest layer, we glimpse the soul, our eternal nature.

The deepest layer is described as "bliss" body - one model of which contains several

चक्रम् - cakram "wheel, spinning cerebrospinal center"

These "wheels" are subtle sensation and organization centers which can be approached using sounds, which facilitate experiencing their refined, subtle or even "atomic" nature.

The four initial primary sounds - as one is progressing inward and connecting their physical body to their subtle body - are

लं, वं, रं, यं lam, vam, ram, yam - the 4 stand-betweens (semi-vowels), each ending with the most resonant sound

So perhaps another reason for the term -

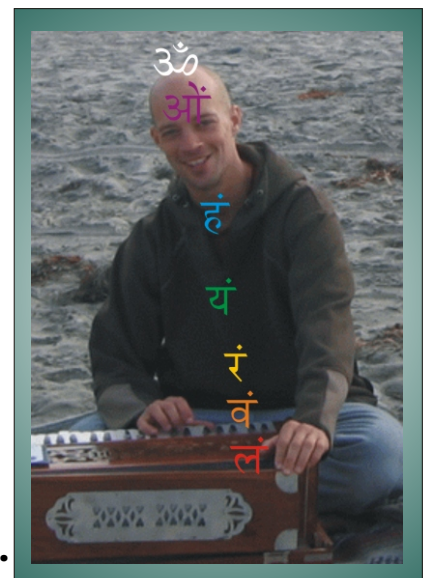
अन्तस्थ antastha is a sound "standing inside, between" the physical and energetic body.

अन्तर antar "inside, between, in the midst of, interior"

स्थ stha "standing, stand"

This entire central channel meditation using sounds is called the

बीजमन्त्र: bijamantrah or "Spell of the Seeds". As seeds are the essence of a plant - we have a soul Essence - and this is an invocation for connecting to that Inner-essence.





Next we learn of the

उष्मन् *uṣhman* "heat, warmth" (breath sounds), which are श, ष, स, ह

These sounds are made by using the wind of the breath to "heat" up, or warm a "mark" in the mouth - the friction of air passing between two parts of the mouth causes the sound.

The final two sounds covered actually occur earlier in the वर्णमाला, but they are best learned by english speakers at the end, as they are related to other sounds.

अनुस्वारः *anusvarah* "connecting sound" is written as अं *am* in the वर्णमाला, but it can occur with any tone, not just अ (*a*). This sound connects any tone to the immediate following consonant - connecting to that consonant with resonance.

It is a connecting sound - thus it should match the situation, be a good connector:

संस्कारः *sanskārah* is a good example. अनुस्वारः should take this dental value (*n*),

because it is a "connecting sound" between (a of सं) and the dental letter र *s*. Often it is mispronounced *samskarah* in the american yoga community due to the use of transliteration, which often has "m" for a generic transliteration of *anusvarah*. This becomes *sampskarah* unintentionally - which occurs when a resonant at a different position is mis-matched with a following mark. This is what happens as language devolves.

If अनुस्वारः occurs at the end of a word, then the simplest and most powerful resonant at the lips is chosen. Thus अं is *am*, because it is "connecting" to the end - represented by the lips (the end of the mouth channel).

Finally we have the last sound we learn

विसर्गः *visargah* "a sending forth", written as अः in the वर्णमाला. It also occurs after any tone. It is a "sending forth" of the breath, accentuating the tone. Most frequently it occurs at the end of words. In such cases, a slight echo might be heard, but it should never become a full repetition of the preceding tone.

For example, in the common chant:

शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः *shāntiḥ shāntiḥ shāntiḥ*

the final "shāntiḥ" may have an echo because no sound comes after it. It should not become "shāntiḥi", after all it is a "sending forth". If there is any echo, it is due to the mouth returning to neutral after the tone.

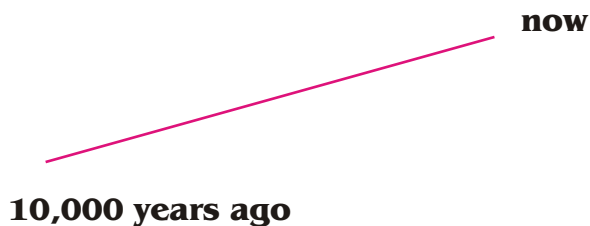
This विसर्गः *visargah* "sending forth" also is the end of the tone (vowel) section of the वर्णमाला - and sends us forth into the marks (consonants). Its opposite, ह *ha*, is at the end of the consonants, and returns us to the tones. Ring of Sounds.

# Approximation of Time & Human Evolution

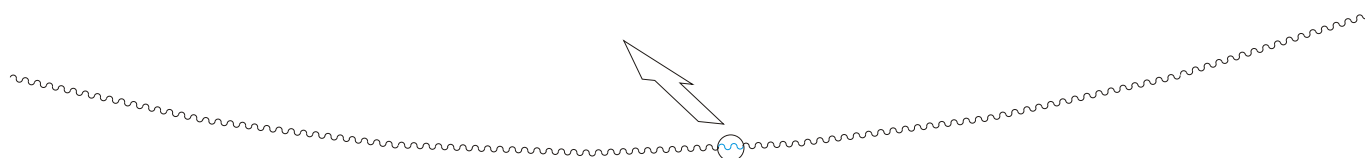
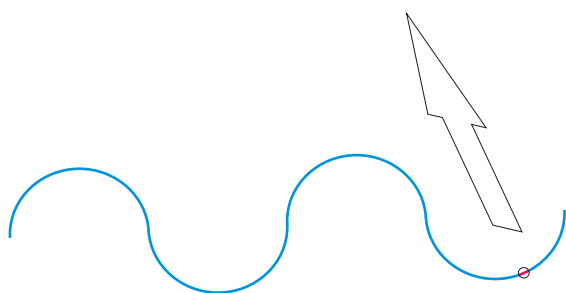
In the blue curve, the low points represent times when the masses of people are caught up in the material world, fighting to survive - fighting each other and the natural world. The higher points represent a time when things are much different than we can even imagine now - humans in harmony with each other and the natural world. The pink line represents the common western view of human evolution. I placed this pink line in the blue curve where many yogic texts describe us to be. Written language is from oral traditions, which may contain relics - teachings, tools - from a more enlightened time, reminding us to seek our true Divine nature.

At any point in any age, God is available to us if we can only trust to get off the linear plane and connect to the Infinite. Infinity is a lot to open up to (as Arjuna discovers in the Bhagavad Gītā) and a linear approach is much safer for most minds. However, any linear system (religion or science) must acknowledge its inherent lack of dimension.

**Common Western concept of time and the progression of human consciousness**



**Simplified approximation of theoretical physics' and yogic view of time and progression of human consciousness**



**Even the cyclic nature of human consciousness as part of a larger cycle.**

As for whether written language represents a growth in human evolution, I don't believe it to be that straightforward. Certainly there is usefulness in writing. But my happiest times have come from transcendental experiences - in meditation or in absorption in an outdoor experience, even from storytelling, singing around a fire, or simply sunrise at the beach. These direct experiences of transcendence I could sing or talk about. Then they could be written down... but no descriptions ever quite compare.

Oral tradition is always in the present - always responsive to what is occurring in the now. If my 89 year old grandmother asked me what yoga is, I would have an answer for her. If my 6 year old neighbor asked, I would have a different answer for her. If I were to write down what yoga is, it would be a composite, not as accurate for either of them at their respective stages in life.

Certainly my early education and western cultural heritage implied that written cultures are smarter than oral cultures, that we are smarter than humans were long ago. But it has been the non-linear intelligence, of the indigenous people I have met, that seems to be more powerful than my critical mind. As well, the appreciation of death as part of the natural cycle seems preferable to the fear of death that seems to rule our culture. This is not to glorify indigenous cultures of which I have very little experience. Rather, to say that in place of material accumulation and the ability to have power over others, I have chosen to value spiritual attainment and the ability to live harmoniously with the natural world. This seems to require glimpsing past the illusion of the material plane and its illusion of death, and instead seeing this plane as a place to evolve as all Life does.

In yogic literature, as elsewhere, humans are described as both material and spiritual. Humans exist as a part of the natural world, subject to the natural cycles of birth-maturation-decay-seed. Yet we are also spirit - we can glimpse something beyond this dimension, beyond this life-death cycle. The more we can glimpse our spiritual connection, that which does not change, the more we are "enlightened". This seems to be what Jesus knew, and our attainment of this state, the "Second Coming of Christ".

In yogic literature, similar to theoretical physics' description of Time, human consciousness is described as passing through huge epochs of time in a cyclical process. As we rise in consciousness, we are less caught up in fighting nature and each other. As we evolve, we live in harmony with that which we cannot change - the huge power of the natural cycles. We learn (through generations) these cycles and harmonize with them. Our lives are less about struggling for survival and the fear of death, and more about enjoying life - using each living day to transcend old limiting fear patterns.

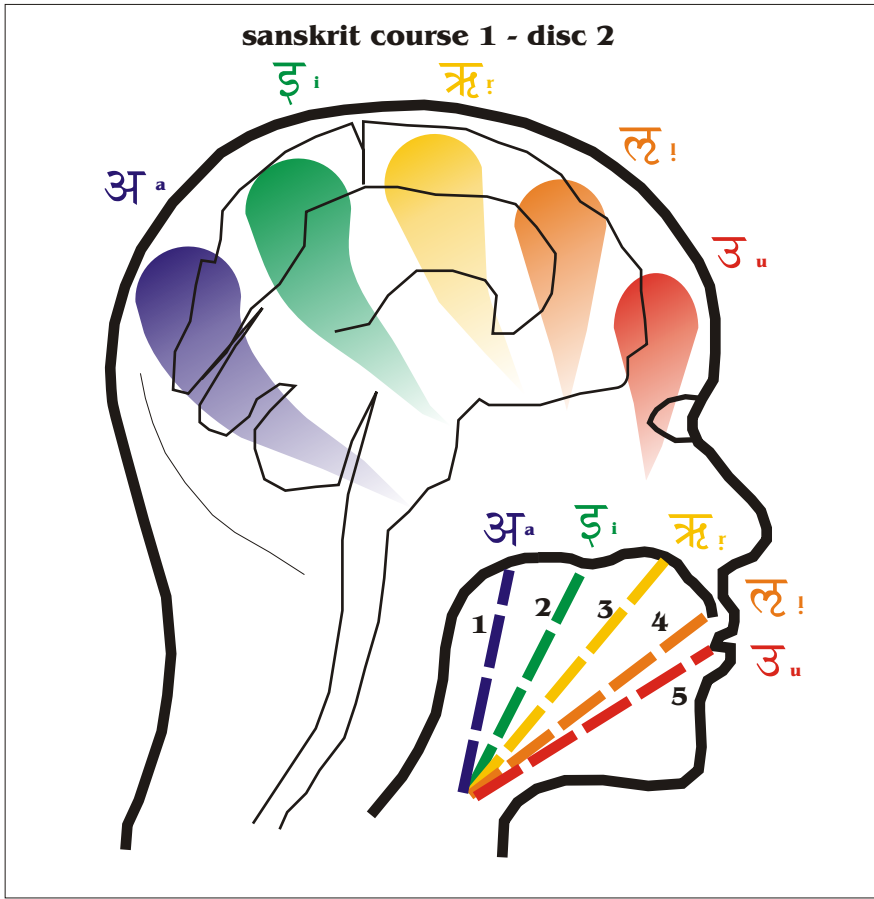
Just like other cycles (sunrise-noon-sunset-midnight, or spring-summer-fall-winter), human mass-consciousness passes through great cycles. In the dark ages, it is all struggle and fear of death. Gradually there is understanding of energy, subtler planes, and of our eternal state. Eventually, we all live with the natural cycles - we understand them and can read them - without so much fear of death. There will always be a few who can glimpse past the struggles of the material plane and overcome the fear of death. But we do not live in an age where most people are there.

My point is to introduce the possibility: sanskrit may be a relic of something much older. The written characters are more recent, and do not necessarily represent a growth for the language - as much as they seem to represent a way for a group of wizards to share knowledge with common folk. We are in a time when the magic, the esoteric practices of most spiritual groups are now being shared with the more "common" folks.

The magic is first - the connection to the Divine is a subtle experience: sung about, then written about. It is not the writing that is the evolution. It is important to use the relic (writing) that we have to get a glimpse behind the linear world of writing.

Learn to write - but REMEMBER TO SING AND MEDITATE ! Yoga (and the sanskrit describing it) is process not a result - it is a practice and an experience! Enjoy - Pierre

cover images for any cds you make



Sanskrit Course 1 - the Ring of Sounds

|   |   |   |   |    |    |
|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| अ | आ | इ | ई | उ  | ऊ  |
| ऋ | ॠ | ऌ | ॡ |    |    |
| ए | ऐ | ओ | औ | अं | अः |
| क | ख | ग | घ | ङ  |    |
| च | छ | ज | झ | ञ  |    |
| ट | ठ | ड | ढ | ण  |    |
| त | थ | द | ध | न  |    |
| प | फ | ब | भ | म  |    |
| य | र | ल | व |    |    |
| श | ष | स | ह |    |    |

### sanskrit course 1 - disc 3

| Position                  | Sound Quality | अल्पप्राण<br>श्वासः<br>Unaspirated<br>unvoiced               | महाप्राण<br>श्वासः<br>Aspirated<br>unvoiced | अल्पप्राण<br>- नादः<br>Unaspirated<br>voiced | महाप्राण<br>- नादः<br>Aspirated<br>voiced | अनुनासिक<br>- नादः<br>Nasal<br>(Resonant) |
|---------------------------|---------------|--|---|--|---|---|
|                           |               | (clicks)   |   | (vibrations)                                 |   |   |
| १ कण्ठ<br>1 Velar         |               | क<br>ka  | ख<br>kha                                    | ग<br>ga                                      | घ<br>gha                                  | ङ<br>ṅa<br>(nga)                          |
| २ तालव्य<br>2 Palatal     |               | च<br>ca  | छ<br>cha                                    | ज<br>ja                                      | झ<br>jha                                  | ञ<br>ña<br>(nya)                          |
| ३ मूर्धन्य<br>3 Retroflex |               | ट<br>ṭa  | ठ<br>ṭha                                    | ड<br>ḍa                                      | ढ<br>ḍha                                  | ण<br>ṇa                                   |
|                           |               | (no english equivalents - place tongue up in the high notch) |   |  |   |   |
| ४ दन्त्य<br>4 Dental      |               | त<br>ta  | थ<br>tha                                    | द<br>da                                      | ध<br>dha                                  | न<br>na                                   |
|                           |               | (no english equivalents - place tongue at the top teeth)     |   |  |   |   |
| ५ ओष्ठ्य<br>5 Labial      |               | प<br>pa  | फ<br>pha                                    | ब<br>ba                                      | भ<br>bha                                  | म<br>ma                                   |