

LESSON 1

THE SANSKRIT ALPHABET

1. **The Vowels**—There are 13 vowels in the Sanskrit alphabet. They are divided into simple vowels and diphthongs.

Every simple vowel, except the last, last shows a short and a long form.

Simple vowels { short : अ a इ i उ u ऋ r लृ l
long : आ ā ई ē औ au

Diphthongs : ए e ऐ ai ओ o औ au

2. **The Consonants**—The Sanskrit consonants are classified according to the organs of pronunciation. There are five categories : those pronounced from the **throat** are called **gutturals** ; those pronounced from the **palate** are called **palatals** ; those pronounced from the **roof of the mouth** are called **cerebrals** ; those pronounced from the **teeth** are called **dentals** ; those pronounced from the **lips** are called **labials**—The Sanskrit names for those five categories are :

कण्ठ्य, तालव्य, मूर्धन्य, दन्त्य, ओष्ठ्य

Each category contains seven consonants : 5 mutes, 1 semi-vowel and 1 sibilant. The five mutes of each category are divided as follows : 2 hard mutes, one non-aspirate, the other aspirate ; 3 soft mutes, one non aspirate, the second aspirate and the third nasal. The semi-vowels are soft, the sibilants are hard.

M U T E S

| | Hard non-asp. | Hard aspirate | Soft non-asp. | Soft aspirate | Soft nasal | Semi- vowels | Sibi- lants |
|-----------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|
| GUTTURALS | क ka | ख kha | ग ga | घ gha | ङ ṅa | (ह ha) | : ḥ |
| PALATALS | च ca | छ cha | ज ja | झ jha | ञ ña | य ya | श śa |
| CEREBRALS | ट ṭa | ठ ṭha | ड ḍa | ढ ḍha | ण ṇa | र ra | ष ṣa |
| DENTALS | त ta | थ tha | द da | ध dha | न na | ल la | स sa |
| LABIALS | प pa | फ pha | ब ba | भ bha | म ma | व va | : ḥ |