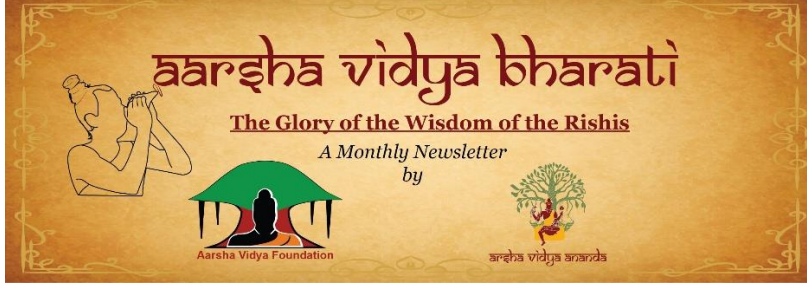

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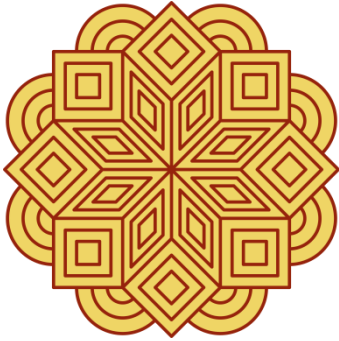
Samskr̥tam - Samyak Krtam

By Kavita Shah, Mumbai

सम्यक् कृतम् इति संस्कृतम् ।

A few years ago when I was reading Gitanjali in English, a Bengali friend remarked that if I really wanted to read Rabindranath Tagore's works then I should learn Bangla first. I decided to test his statement. I narrowed down on the autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi "My Experiments with Truth" which is widely translated. First I read the original work in Gujarati "सत्य ना प्रयोग" and then in Hindi, Marathi and English. To my surprise I found that the English translation was better than the ones in Hindi and Marathi though these two languages have emanated like Gujarati from the same mother language. I understood what my friend was trying to convey.

Any language has certain vocabulary, customary phrases, proverbs, which are integral to it. The construct of the language is the core, which makes it unique in its own way. Some phrases can never be translated in other languages. One can use some other words which are close enough or one can take help of some other words to convey the closest meaning or intention. Any original work offers a peep though the **author's lens**.



When I started studying Vedanta, I knew that I had to learn *Samskr̥tam*. *Īśvara* has chosen *Samskr̥tam* also known as **Dev-vani** to reveal the absolute knowledge. The Vedas revealed to the Rishis in this language which were then compiled by *Mahaṛṣi Veda Vyāsa*. The script now used is *Devanāgarī* but in the olden times the scripts were *Brāhmī*, *Kharoṣṭi*, *Nagri*, *Śārdā* etc. It is believed that in the ancient times, there were 9 systems of grammar and Lord Hanumanji knew them all. With the passage of time they are lost and today we only have the *Paṇini sūtra-s*, based on *Māheśvara sūtraṇi*. These sutras and grammar rules help in becoming familiar with the language which in turn helps in understanding the *Śāstra-s* better.

One can break the words by applying the **sandhi** rules, recognize the *prātipadikam* (crude noun forms), *dhātu* (verbal roots) etc. In a verse, the words

like “श्रोतव्य, मंतव्य” (*śrotavya, mantavya*) show the use of the tavyavidhyārthapratyaya, the *vidhāna* of the *Śāstra-s* that *śravaṇam, mananam*, to be done by a *śiṣya*.

The words used in the *Śāstra-s* like *Māyā, Mithya, Hirāṇyagarbha* can never be translated but only explained. शमः (*śamaḥ*) one of the *śatka sampatti-s* is explained as psychological resolution. This word is derived from the root *śama* i.e to quieten. Therefore it is not the control of the mind (निग्रह - *nigraha*) as may have been translated in some text. At the outset the misinterpretation ‘control of the mind’ is avoided. These **nuances strike in the mind** like the rays of the light in the dark. The words like Yoga, *Jñānam* are used interchangeably throughout Bhagavad Gita.

If I tell you “I am at the bank of a river”, you ask me “Would you describe the river for me? If we both know *Saṁskṛtam* then I may say सा “धूनी” (*sā dhūnī*) (the literal translation is eccentric but what it means is that is flowing free spirited), “तरंगिणी” (*taraṅgiṇī*) (has rhythmic waves) or “आह्लादिनी” (*āhlādinī*) (delightful). My **accurate description** is conveyed in minimum words aesthetically without any confusion and adds to your delight.



Saṁskṛtam is an **affluent** language. There are 70 words for Water, 65 for Earth, 34 for Fire, 22 for Space, 17 for Air, 14 for Gold and so on. One can assume its richness, greatness, vastness and the grasp of the things that it bestows upon its learner. It has versatility and holds commendable power of expression. Its opulence can be cognized of from this *EkaŚlokiRāmāyaṇam*, where the entire story of *Rāmāyaṇam* is beautifully encompassed.

“आदौ राम तपोवनाभिगमनं हत्वा मृगकांचनम्। वैदेहीहरणं जटायुमरणं सुग्रीवसंभाषणम्। वालीनिर्दलनं समुद्रतरणं लंकापुरीदाहनम्। पश्चाद्वावणकुम्भकर्णहननं एतद्धि रामायणम्॥“

There are classic **value based entertaining stories** in Panchatantra, Hitopadesha for children who are our future generations, simple prayers to sow the seeds of bhakti in them. The grownups can read and experience all the Navarasas imbibed in the prose, poetry and dramatics and learn to accept and enjoy the wide range of emotions. There is an ocean of **subhāṣitani** (aphorisms). There are time immemorial books on the teachings of dharma, values and rituals too. The list is unending.

Saṁskṛtam also helps in learning the right **pronunciations** and the chanting of the Mantras, Japa, which is an important *sādhana* for any Vedanta student. Hindi does not have the consonants “ळ” and “ण”. The vowel “लृ” has magically vanished from our regional alphabets and so also some of the consonants. Not many pronounce the alphabets “श”, “ष”, “स” in the correct way. A certain foodie community happily eats away both the “श” and “ष” and the leftover in the spoken language is “स”. A certain traditional community mixes up “द and ध , प and फ, त and थ, ब and भ “.

The *Saṃskṛtamvarṇamālā* is made of अच् (*ac*) (swara/vowels) and हल् (*hal*) (*vyañjana*/consonants). The part of the mouth from which each *varṇa* is pronounced is known as it's *Uccharaṇasthanam*.

Sr No.	वर्ण (Varna)	उच्चारण-स्थानानि (Place of Pronunciation)
1.	अ, आ, क् ख् ग् घ्, ङ्, ह्, विसर्ग (ः)	कंठ्यः <i>kaṇṭhyaḥ</i> (Gutturals)
2.	इ, ई, च् छ् ज् झ्, य्, श	तालव्यः <i>tālavyaḥ</i> (Palatals)
3.	ऋ ट् ठ् ड् ढ् ण् ङ्, द्, र्, ष्	मूर्धन्यः <i>mūrdhanyaḥ</i> (Cerebrals)
4.	त् थ् द् ध् न् ल् स्	दंत्यः <i>dantyaḥ</i> (Dentals)
5.	उ ऊ प् फ् ब् भ् म्	ओष्ठ्यः <i>oṣṭhyaḥ</i> (Labials)
6.	अं, ङ्, ञ्, ण्, न्, म्	अनुनासिक <i>anunāsikā</i> (Nasal)
7.	ए ऐ	कंठतालव्यः <i>kaṇṭhatālavyaḥ</i> (Guttural and Palatal)
8.	ओ औ	कंठोष्ठ्यः <i>kaṇṭhoṣṭhyaḥ</i> (Guttural and Labial)
9.	व्	दंतोष्ठ्यः <i>dantoṣṭhyaḥ</i> (Dental and Labial)

There are further **classifications** of the concerned *varṇa* into *sparśa*, *antstha*, *ūṣmaṇa*, *alpaprāṇa*, *mahāprāṇa*, *anunāsikā*, *kaṭhōra*, *mṛidu*, *hrasva*, *dīrgha*, *pluta* etc. In the Vedic chants these *varṇa-s* are also chanted/sung in the *Sāma* Veda as *udātta*, *svarita* and *anudātta*.

To sum up, *Saṃskṛtam* is the most **structured and organised** language. The rules of modern computer science resemble the rules of grammar. Its etymology keeps pace with the modern times and it is never outdated. It improves memory, expands and sharpens the mind and concentration power. Its literature is like an ocean and a lifetime is not enough to read it. For any Vedanta student its systematic study enhances the understanding of the Shastras. If the language is not known then there is a total dependency on the translations and some may not be accurate.



Learning *Saṃskṛtam* helps in improving **chanting** of the Shlokas, Shanti Mantras, Stotrams etc and to emotionally connect with *Īśvara*. These chants do not become arid as one begins to see and understand the meaning of what one is chanting. Without *Īśvara kṛpā* and *Guru kṛpā* it is impossible to gain the absolute. To assimilate the discipline of this language is *Atma kṛpā*. It's rewarding and easy if the inhibition and assumption that it is tough is dropped.

Awareness and eventually contribution plays an important part in preserving our **Vedic culture and traditions**. Learning, spreading and preserving *Saṃskṛtam* is one of the ways. My journey on this path stepped up in

many ways from the time I started learning and focusing on *Samskṛtam*. At times the Upanishads talk to me in the sense of unfolding the truth. Since the Vedas are *Apauruṣeya* (not by human) then one is not sure of the origin of this language but the sweet truth is that it is sacred and will be around enlightening people's lives in many ways till the end of this Kalpa.

(Kavita Shah has passed 4 levels of Sanskrit exams (Parichay, Pravesh, Pravin and Kovid conducted by "Gyanprabha" affiliated with Pune University) besides her busy profession as a lawyer)