

Latin Terms in Sanskrit Dictionaries

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Abstract

Every well-composed abbreviation should remain concise and easy to understand. The discovery by European scholars of how to transcribe, i.e., Latinize the “divine *Nāgarī*” without great losses has provided us with a valuable tool.

For the same reason, that is conciseness and greater convenience, we use Latin grammar terms instead of original Sanskrit terms (as *sphota*, *bahuvacana*, *utama*, *karaka*), which are hardly understood outside India.

Fairness, however, demands that obvious defects should be acknowledged. Seemingly flawless Latin grammatical terms are not always self-explanatory or may become misleading owing to their inherent variety. Sanskrit terms are even more contradictory. Despite some discrepancies and stratification, Latin alphabet and Latin terms still remain easier to use, because they work as “anchors” of associations for a Western scholar.

1 Prejudices against Latin transliteration

Nāgarī, the script used widely for Sanskrit, is believed by some to represent a modification of Aramic letters. Although the Latin alphabet, too, can be traced to the same common rudimentary stock of Aramic characters, it is at least in scientific literature more economic than a syllabic script.

Every well-composed abbreviation should remain concise yet easy to understand. Such an abbreviation, if made aptly, resembles a Semitic consonantal root. This benefits Indian languages with their intricate, complex scripts. Chinese ideograms, too, form similar abbreviations by using key characters from a phrase.

It was a revolutionary invention and an expressive gesture by a European scholar, Sir Monier-Williams, who in his Sanskrit-English Dictionary announced that the “divine *Nāgarī*” with its “subtle distinctions of sacred sounds” can reasonably faithfully be represented by means of what he called an Indo-Italic alphabet.

Inveterate prejudices and peculiarities have always posed obstacles to compilers of native Indian grammars and dictionaries; some of which are still topical today. In fact, it has turned out that the „admirably perfect *Deva-nāgarī* alphabet“ with its „500 ligatures“ is disadvanta-

geous in comparison to typographical neatness of the Roman types. To use the *nāgarī* in dictionary resembles German Gothic letters on the Internet: ornamental in its form, but painfully time-consuming when it comes to deciphering them.

The Sanskrit dictionaries in Europe have mostly been compiled in German and English, the work by French, Russian¹ and even the native lexicographers remaining far less prominent. Still, all of them co-exist which does not mean that they are mutually beneficial. It is indeed true that where the “elements of the language have been fully and distinctly developed and explained”, there still remains an “inadequacy of the means”.²

2 Greater convenience of Latin terms

Thus, Latin grammar terms are used “for conciseness and greater convenience”.³ They are complemented by graphic signs, e.g., the mark „°-“ for the less handy „in comp[ounds].”, „cpd.“ when written verbally, or the „ square root-sign“, „to catch the eye as quick as possible”.⁴ It must be noted that those are far more perfect than the German abbreviations „Wz., W. (Wg): Würzel (Zh)“ or their English, French and Latin counterparts „R: root (Wb), rac[ine]. (Hn), radical“).

Theoretically, the only universally accepted rule is that of consistency. Fairness, however, demands that obvious defects should be acknowledged. As it was said before, even the Latin grammatical terms are not always self-explanatory and may become misleading. Exempli causa: „c.“ – is not only (1) conjugation or (2) class, but can as well denote a (3) causal form, as part of (4) „nom c[ase]“ or even (5) Classical Sanskrit; „f.“ – reserved for „femininum“, occasionally comes across as „futurum“ (Kn) and “for” (Mc). Three various abbreviations „interj., int., ij“ are used for interjection. This instance, let alone the more than twelve transliterations of the letter „ç“, confessedly offends against scientific exactness. Both scripts have their defects and therefore should be used in parallel.

The positive and negative side of the Latin terms (written with Latin characters as opposed to those in Devanāgarī and Cyrillic) can be exemplified as follows:

2.1 Simple cases

The simplest instance involving of abbreviation confusion arises in the case of homographs:

„V.“ – *vocativus* (Hn, Ko), *Vedic* (Ln, Wh, Mc), *Vopadeva* (Rn), *vide* (Fr), *Vikram* (j); „V“ – *Vollstufe* (MR), *vowel* (Bk), *voir* (Hn)

A more complex case involves capital letters or diacritic signs (mostly dated) distinguishing abbreviations which consist of a single letter:

¹ V. Kozyrev. *Russkaya leksikografia*. Moscow, Drofa, 2004. – S. 46.

² The History of Sanskrit Grammar / by William Dwight Whitney. Delhi, Sanjay Prakashan, 2002, p. 2.

³ F. Knauer. *Ucebnik' sanskriskago jazyka*. Leipzig, W. Dragulin 1908. – S. 192.

⁴ Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 3rd edition. Longman Group Ltd, Essex, England, 1995, p. xi.

„P.“ – *Parasmaipada* (Ko), *Person* (MR), *pagina* (Wb), *Praesens, Pluralis* (Bt), *Pānini's Ashthādyaī* (Wg, Ap, Rn), *Prosa* (Db), *Purāna* (Mc) *Prajna* (j); *p[assivum]* (Ko) with a freq. variant „pass.“ (Fr)

„A“ – or *Atm. Atmanepada* (Ap), *átm.* (MW), *Aktivum, Āfrīnakān* (Bt), *Anmerkung* (Wg); *Ā.* (St, Kl, Mc, Ko), *Akkusativ* (St, Hn, MR); „a“ *adjective* (Ln, Fr), *apabhamça* (Th), *article* (?);

„S.“ – *ai, au* (Si), *Sūtra* (Ln, Wg); „S“ – *Schwundstufe* (MR), *Sārasvata* (Rn), *Semantik* (Wb), *Sav-irī* (Kn), *Samkhya* (?); „s“ – *singular* (Ln, Mc), *substantivum* (MW, Ko), *simple* (Bk), *siehe* (My), *summary* (?)

„N.“ – *Nominative case* (Hn, Mc), *Name* (St), *name of a man or woman* (Mc), *Naishadhacarita* (Ap), *Nyāsa* (Rn) *Nala*, (Kn); *neuter* (Ln, Wb); *note in Small Caps* (Ln)

„M.“ – *Manu* (Wh, Wg, Kn), *Murti*;⁵ „m“ – *masculinum* (Ko, Wb), *mitten* (Bt)

„c.“ – *conjugation, class* (MW), *causal form*, „*nom c[ase]*“ (MW), *Classical Sanskrit* (Mc), *cakre* (RB), *cum* (Th); *C[onsonant]* (Bk), *Kausativum* (Th), *Cāndra* (Rn), *Carvaka* (?)

Another rather easy case is represents the confusion of “Sprachenbezeichnungen” with “Grammatische Bezeichnungen”, with no distinction being made between the two:

„lit.“ – *literally* (Ln), *littauisch* (Th) and *Literaturwissenschaft* (My), but „lit.“ with identical function in French (Hn).

So Jakob Wackernagel, mentioning that it is “Whitneys Weise”, lists the sources in capital letters, keeping only the first letter of the title (or, in case of a compound, both letters), as in

„MS.“ *Maitrāyanīsamhitā* (as MS for manuscript or the Indian journal “Modern Schoolman”), „AV.“ *Atharvavedasamhitā* (Wg)

The Sanskrit dictionary which is quoted as the ultimate authority, the *Sanskrit-Wörterbuch*⁶ (W) printed in Petersburg (P) by Otto Böhtlingk (B) and Rudolph Roth (R), großes (G) and after that kleines (K) (full and concise versions of it). Depending on which item is seen as the most important one, there are at least five variants of referring to it by means of an abbreviation:

PW (Bt, Th, Wb), *Bö* (Wh), *PWG* (MG), *BR* (Db, Ln), *PW1* (Kö); *pw* (Th, Wb), *KBR* (?), *PW2* (Kö); *PWN*[achträge] (Wb for Sc)

There are variants of acronyms which are poorly argued, if at all:

„fn.“ – *fēminin* (Hn), „Nm.“ – *nominative* (Mc, Ko)

Etymological dictionaries present extra difficulties that have not always been solved properly:

⁵ T.R.V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*. London 1955.

⁶ *Sanskrit-Wörterbuch* / bearb. von Otto von Böhtlingk u. Rudolph Roth. – St. Petersburg: Kaiserl. Akad. d. Wissenschaften.

instead of a more logical „urGr“ we have „urgr.“, „jaw.“, „jAw.“, „aisl.“ aIsl. (Th) relating to specific types of compounds: „Bah[uvr̥hi].“, „Tat[purusha].“ etc. (Kl.)

There are a series of original acronym used only once, a half of which are, to put mildly, quite strange:

„unbest.Art.“ – indefinite article (MR), „An[merkung].“ – note (St), „dass[elbe].“ – instead of Latin *ibidem*. or *id.* (St), „CAo“ – causative aorist (Bk), „U.f.“ – uncombined form (Ln), „od[er].“ – or (My), „d.“ – distich (Bf)

2.2 Hieroglyphic acronyms

Some of the acronyms reproduced in other editions function, as it were, graphically namely, not only as a “mark” or “tag”, but more like an “emblem”:

prob[ably]. – (?) (Ln), v[ie]ll[eiht]. – (?) (Bt), ev[entuell]. – (?) (Wb); St[amm]. (Th), OCH. (Ko) st[em]. (MC); schw[ach]. – weak grade, st[ark]. – full grade (St), „red[upliziert].“, „R1, R2, R3“ (Wb), „V, S, D“ (MR), w[ea]k., str[ong]. (MC); AK, EK (Th) and aA, aE (Bt) and V[order]g[lied]., H[inter]g[lied]. [eines Kompositums] (Wb) Comp. (Bf)

Although the German terms are not always self-explanatory (a part of them are superfluous duplicates or hard to grasp by non-Germans), they are not useless:

The awkward German „B[e]d[eu]t[un]g.“ and English „mg, mgs“ – meaning (Ln), and a better solution (Bt) on the analogy of „z[um]B[eispiel]“ and 18 another formations as „z[ur]F[orm]“, „z[um]T[eil]“ etc.

The other half of the rare acronym could be of great interest and not only for a collection-er:

„ff.“ – and the following (Ln) instead of „folg[ende].“ (Th); usage labels „assev[erative].“, „colloq[ui]al.“, „reg[ular].“, „sc[ilicet].“ – (Ln); „irreg.“ – irregular (MW, Ln), „vulg[är].“ (MR), „Rhet[oric].“ (Kl)

I think that the optimal way of abbreviating would comprise „small classes“ depending on the concept classification. There are abbreviations consisting of 1, 2, 3, 4 letters (in small, capital; italics, bold; small caps or different fonts) and, in rare cases, two parts, representing more than 4 letters.

2.3 Proposed optimal solution

One-letter abbreviation:

a) for cases „N[ominative].“, „G[enitive].“, „L[ocative].“ and combinations involving cases (without the dot sign to economize space) as IDAbl., NA. and GL. (Kn) instead of Ab.G., D.Ab. (Mc). b) for voices ‘Ā’, ‘A’, ‘P’, ‘p’

Two-letter abbreviations:

a) for persons sg. du. pl. instead of sing. or plur. b) participium pp. pn.

Three-letter abbreviations:

a) for voices *Ātm.*, *Par.* (Bf) b) moods *Inj.*, *Ipv.*, *Ipf.*, *Ppf.*, *Prc.*, *Gdv.*, *Inf.*, in small caps (Mc) c) languages *skt.* *pk.* (Kn), *Ssk.* (Bf)

Four-letter abbreviations:

a) for moods *caus. pass.* b) participium *ppfa.* *ppph.* c) miscellaneous *onom[apoetic].* (MC)

3 Cooperation with original Sanskrit terms

The grammarian Pānini, the godfather of Indian linguistics has indeed invented (or at least popularized) several self-made abbreviations as „LAT, LAN“ or „ādi“ for „etc&“ that could compete with their Latin equivalents, but are used only in India and therefore are territorially restricted.

Despite occasional discrepancies the Latin alphabet and Latin terms are easy to use, because there are “anchors” of associations for a Western scholar. There is, e.g., “kha” (=lopa) for “null”, that is “ø” or “ep” (=guna), “aip” (=virdhi) in Jinendra’s Kosha⁷ (“basket of words”). Or “ma” which Jinendra uses as “parasmaipadam” yet Vopadeva has “ātmanepadam” instead. Latin can and should be used in conjunction with Sanskrit for the sake of “lightness” which is the motto of Pānini, the father of generative grammar.

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⁷ Theodor Zachariae. Opera minora zur indischen Wortforschung, zur Geschichte der indischen Literatur und Kultur, zur Geschichte der Sanskritphilologie. Teil 1. Hrsg. von Claus Vogel (Veröffentlichungen der Glasenapp-Stiftung Band 12). Stuttgart, 1976 S. 303.

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