

amount needed for the full Brāhmī lipi, as used for the Sanskrit of that period, could not have been less than fifty (if the symbols for *ai*, *au*, *ṛi*, *ṛī*, *ḷi*, *ḷī*, and *ḷa* be included).

Then, if we turn to the Brāhma alphabet in its final development, called Nāgarī, we see at a glance that it is based on the scientific phonetic principle of 'one sound one symbol'—that is, every consonantal sound is represented by one invariable symbol, and every shade of vowel-sound—short, long, or prolated—has one unvarying sign (not as in English where the sound of *e* in *be* may be represented in sixteen different ways). Hence, for the expression of the perfectly constructed Sanskrit language there are sixteen vowel-signs (including *am* and *aḥ* and excluding the prolated vowel forms), and thirty-five simple consonants, as exhibited on p. xxxvi of this volume.

Of course a system of writing so highly elaborated was only perfected by degrees¹, and no doubt it is admirably adapted to the purposes it is intended to serve. Yet it is remarkable that even in its latest development, as employed in the present Dictionary, it has characteristics indicative of its probable original connexion with Semitic methods of writing, which from their exclusively consonantal character are admittedly imperfect.

For the Pandits, unlike the Greeks and Romans, cannot in my opinion be said to have adopted to the full the true alphabetic theory which assigns a separate independent position to all vowel-signs. And my reason for so thinking is that they make the commonest of all their vowels—namely short *a*²—inherent in every isolated consonant, and give a subordinate position above or below consonants to some of their vowel-signs. And this partially syllabic character of their consonantal symbols has compelled them to construct an immense series of intricate conjunct consonants, some of them very complicated, the necessity for which may be exemplified by supposing that the letters of the English word 'strength' were Nāgarī letters, and written सतरेनगथ. This would have to be pronounced *satarenagatha*, unless a conjunction of consonantal signs were employed, to express *str* and *ngth*, and unless the mark called Virāma, 'stop,' were added to the last consonant. So that with only thirty-three simple consonants and an almost indefinite number of complex conjunct consonants the number of distinct types necessary to equip a perfect Sanskrit fount for printing purposes amounts to more than 500.

Surely, then, no one will maintain that, in these days of every kind of appliance for increased facilities of inter-communication, any language is justified in shutting itself up behind such a complex array of graphic signs, however admirable when once acquired. At all events such a system ought not to have the monopoly for the expression of a language belonging to the same family as our own and in a country forming an integral part of the British Empire. The Sanskrit language, indeed, is a master-key to a knowledge of all the Hindū vernaculars, and should moreover be studied as a kind of linguistic bond of sympathy and fellow-feeling between the inhabitants of the United Kingdom and their Indian fellow-subjects. But to this end every facility ought to be afforded for its acquirement.

And if, as we have tried to show, the Brāhmī lipi, the Nāgarī, and the Greek and Romanic alphabets are all four related to each other—at least, in so far as they are either derived from or connected with the same rudimentary stock—it surely cannot be opposed to the fitness of things, that both the Nāgarī and Romanic alphabets should be equally applied to the expression of Sanskrit, and both of them made to co-operate in facilitating its acquisition.

Nor let it be forgotten that in the present day the use of the English language is spreading everywhere throughout India, and that it already co-exists with Sanskrit as a kind of *lingua franca* or medium of communication among educated persons, just as Latin once co-existed with Greek. So much so indeed, that, contemporaneously with the diffusion of the English language, the Roman graphic system, adopted by all the English-speaking inhabitants of the British Empire, has already forced itself on the acceptance of the Pandits, whether they like it or not, as one vehicle for the expression of their languages; just as centuries ago the Arabic and Persian written characters were forced upon them by their Muhammadan conquerors for the expression of Hindī.

It is on this account that I feel justified in designating the European method of transliteration employed in this Dictionary by the term 'Indo-Romanic alphabet.'

And be it understood that such an acceptance of the Romanic alphabet involves no unscientific

¹ The oldest known inscription in Sanskrit is on a rock at Junā-garh in Kāthiāwār. It is called the Rudra-dāman inscription, and dates from the second century A.D. It is not in Nāgarī, but in old inscription letters. The Bower MS. of about 400 A.D. shows a great advance towards the Nāgarī, while Danti-durga's inscription of about 750 A.D. exhibits a complete set of symbols very similar to the Nāgarī now in use. It is noteworthy, however, that the first *manuscript* in really modern Nāgarī is not older than the eleventh century A.D.

² This *ā* is the *a* of our words 'vocal organ' (pronounced *vocul organ*). Sanskrit does not possess the sound of *a* in our 'man,' nor that of *o* in our 'on.' As a consonant cannot be pronounced without a vowel, the Brāhmans chose the commonest of their vowels for the important duty of enabling every consonant to be pronounced. Hence every consonant is named by pronouncing it with *a* (e.g. *ka*, *kha*, *ga* &c.). It is, I suppose, for a similar reason that we have used the common vowel symbol *e* for naming many of our English letters.