CHAPTER 2: THE VEDIC ALPHABET

I. THE SOURCE OF THE VEDIC ALPHABET

The starting point for the study of the Sanskrit alphabet is the direct experience of what in Sanskrit is called Ātmā. In modern times it is described as Transcendental Consciousness, the fourth state of consciousness;¹ it is experienced as the source of thought, unbounded wakefulness, bliss consciousness, the experiencer awake in himself without any object of perception.² The development of experience of Transcendental Consciousness has been systematized in a practical format of instruction, called the Transcendental Meditation® technique. Through the practice of the Transcendental Meditation program, individuals report the experience of “restful alertness,” where the mind is peaceful, restful, but alert, awake inside, while the body is gaining very deep rest.³ Forty years of scientific research on the practice has validated the uniqueness of this state, distinguishing it from ordinary waking state experiences and has shown the growth of higher states of consciousness, states of consciousness utilizing more and more “hidden reserves,” the innate potential of the human nervous system.⁴

When the myriad thoughts and engagements of the active mind settle down, during the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique, and the knower, the inner Self of the individual, remains awake in himself, then that Self or Ātmā, which is unbounded in space and time, comes to be perceived as the source of thought, the source of all the energy and intelligence that is expressed in the various channels of life and living of the individual.⁵ The inner Self is a field of pure life, a field of pure intelligence, pure wakefulness. It is the stirring, the reverberation of this field of infinite intelligence, the inner Self of every individual, that is the starting point of Vedic speech, according to
Maharishi. The generation of speech from the silence of the Self or Ātmā, is described in verses 6 and 7 of the *Pāññiṇīya Śikṣā*:  

अत्मा बुद्धि समेत्यार्थानूः मनो युक्ते विवचया  
मनः कायाग्रिमाहत्ति स प्रेरयति मार्गत्म ६  
मार्गस्तंग्रसि चरन्मण्ड्रे जनयति स्वरम्

The Self stirs with an intention. Together with the intellect, it takes a direction, and engages the mind. The mind strikes the fire of the body, which in turn drives out the air. The air moving within the lungs, causes the emergence of subtle sound, which becomes sound—*Svaram*—the reverberation of the Self.⁶

The first sound, the first letter of the Sanskrit alphabet,⁷ “A” is the reverberation of the Self, the stirring of the unbounded field of pure wakefulness.

II. THE SOUND “A”

The teaching of the Transcendental Meditation technique stems from an ancient Indian tradition called the Vedic tradition, the tradition of “Veda.” The word “Veda” means knowledge, pure knowledge; the Vedic tradition is a tradition of teachers upholding the technology of direct experience of the field of pure knowledge, the Self, and the intellectual understanding of the reverberations of the Self, the stirring of unbounded pure wakefulness in the expressions of pure knowledge, the Veda. The Veda is thousands of years old, preserved in human memory, and recited without variation generation after generation by the Vedic families of India. Maharishi describes the Vedic tradition as a tradition of total knowledge, starting with the sound “A”:

The Vedic tradition is the voice of eternity, and it goes on and on with perfection in its unmanifest value and its manifest value, and how the unmanifest manifests. All that is expressed in the Vedic sounds, Vedic sequentially developing Vedic sounds, starting from one sound “A.” “A” is the first reverberation of total, we can say tradition of knowledge, we can say total knowledge. Total knowledge means eternity—all about silence, all about dynamism. It’s an eternal theme of progression.⁸
On any journey, the starting point, the first step, is like the seed that contains within it the whole progression of the journey up to the final achievement of the goal. Like the first step of a journey, the first sound of the Sanskrit alphabet, which is also the first sound of the Ṛik Veda, contains the total knowledge in seed form. All the possibilities that can be expressed in speech, are abstractly contained in the first letter, which articulates the potentiality of expression: Whatever knowledge can be expressed in speech in all disciplines and phases of life, has its starting point here, in the very first sound of the Sanskrit alphabet:

The entire infinite variety and its organization and expansion are available in one word “A”—totality—just in one word. It’s like when we are far away from a market, we hear one sound: “hummmmm,” one sound. All the innumerable talks of the market collect in one sound, and they are heard as one syllable, “A.” That is “A,” supposing. As we go nearer and nearer, as we become more acquainted with the sound, we enter into the sound, and then we begin to differentiate many sounds with all other sounds. And when we are in the market, we can talk to a man who is selling oranges or diamonds and this and this and this. But from a distance, one syllable. And that one syllable contains all the sounds of the market.9

Like so many different vendors in a marketplace, all the different fields of knowledge merge together in pure abstract potentiality of expression in the sound “A.” From this sound “A” emerge the eight Svara, which are the first stage of expansion of the all-possibilities structure of the first Sanskrit alphabet, “A.”

III. THE EIGHT Svara

The Sanskrit word, “Svara” means vowel; but on a deeper level, Maharishi explains, it is the reverberation, “ra” of the Self, “sva.”10 In the reverberation of the “A,” all the letters of the alphabet are contained; but there is a sequential evolution of sounds, starting from the abstract all-possibilities structure of “A,” and proceeding to more and more concrete, more and more manifest, more and more limited or point value expressions—the openness of the vowels is sequentially clamped down, closed down to
the rigid specificity of the consonants. This progression from abstract to specific, from open throat to closed, from infinity to point, is found already in the first level of expansion of the pure sound “A” into its diverse expressions: Maharishi explains that the first level of expansion is the formation of the eight fundamental, pure vowels, the eight Svara. The eight Svara, as Maharishi has identified them, range from the completely open throat sound of “A,” to the completely closed sound of “M.” Maharishi counts the eight Svara to be “A,” “I,” “U,” “Ri,” “Ri,” “E,” “O,” and “AM.” In this list of eight, only the pure sound, called a “Vara” or color of sound, is represented, and not the various alphabets formed from it, such as “A,” “Ā” and “Ā3,” for example. The diphthong “AI” is left out because in pronunciation, first “A” is pronounced, and then “I” is pronounced, whereas “E” is a continuous homogenous sound distinct from both “A” and “I”; similarly “AU” is left out, but “O,” a homogenous vowel sound is included. The eight Svara are the fundamental irreducible vowel sounds of the Sanskrit language.

Maharishi explains the evolution of the eight Svara from “A”:

How many syllables come up within the “A”? There is a very systematic evolution of “A” into eight: “A,” “I,” “U,” “Ri.” These are the alphabets of the Sanskrit language. “A,” “I,” “U”—like that, there are eight. In the eight is “M.” “A”-infinity; “M,” “Ma,” the point. From infinity to point is the expanded version of the one holistic version of the Constitution of the Universe. And these have been explained in the Vedic Literature in terms of one value: Ātmā, Ātmā—one value, Ātmā. “A”—again, starting from “A”—“A,” significant, one Ātmā.

These eight Svara are the eight-fold reverberations of the Self, Ātmā, and this is the abstract foundation of all Vedic speech. From the eight fundamental Svara, all the vowels of the Sanskrit language may be derived.

IV. THE VOWELS OF THE SANSKRIT LANGUAGE

In the traditional recitation of the alphabet, there are 15 vowels

ऋ ओ औ ए ऐ ऒ ओ ह ए ऐ ओ ओ :
By contrast, the alphabet used in grammar, the Pratyāhāra Sūtra, lists only 9 vowels,

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ā} & \quad \text{ä} & \quad \text{i} & \quad \text{ũ} & \quad \text{u} & \quad \text{ṛ} & \quad \text{lī} & \quad \text{e} & \quad \text{ai} & \quad \text{o} & \quad \text{au} & \quad \text{aṁ} & \quad \text{āḥ} \\
\end{align*}
\]

The list is shortened by allowing a single “A” to stand for short and long versions of the letter, as also for “I,” “U” and “ṛ”; and by leaving out the Anusvāra and Visarga entirely.

Taittirīya Prātishākhya asserts that there are sixteen initial Svāra or vowels:

\[
\text{षोडशशाहित: स्वरा:}
\]

\[
\text{षोडशशाहितह: स्वराह}
\]

There is a traditional couplet describing the sixteen Svāra, and it is presented by Āpishali, Ātreya and Pārī in their respective Shikshā texts:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ह्रस्वदीर्घप्लुतावर्षोवर्षोवर्षोवर्षो: ऋृ ॠृ ॠृ ॠृ} \\
\text{एदैदाधादिति ज्ञेया: षोडशशाहितिः स्वरा:}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ह्रस्व-दीर्घ-प्लुत-अवर्ष-अवर्ष-अवर्षं: ऋृ ॠृ ॠृ ॠृ} \\
\text{एदैदाधादिति ज्ञेया: षोडश-इह-अवर्षं: स्वरा:}
\end{align*}
\]

The couplet requires some explanation: Hrasva, means short, Dīrgha means long, and Pluta refers to the extended long vowels, written with the number three following the letter in the text: The Pluta vowel is said to be held for 3 Mātras, compared to 1 Mātra for the Hrasva vowels, and two Mātras for the Dīrgha vowels.

If the Samādhī is pulled apart, so that the contributing words are seen, then the verse becomes more clear:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ह्रस्व-दीर्घ-प्लुत-अवर्ष-अवर्ष-अवर्षं: ऋृ ॠृ ॠृ ॠृ} \\
\text{एदैदाधादिति ज्ञेया: षोडश-इह-अवर्षं: स्वरा:}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ह्रस्व-दीर्घ-प्लुत-अवर्ष-अवर्ष-अवर्षं: ऋृ ॠृ ॠृ ॠृ} \\
\text{एदैदाधादिति ज्ञेया: षोडश-इह-अवर्षं: स्वरा:}
\end{align*}
\]
The Varṇa or sound “A,” as well as the Varṇa “I” and the Varṇa “U” are found as Hrasva, Dīrgha and Pluta, making for a total of 9 vowels. Added to that are short and long “Rī,” and “Lṛi,” for a total of 12 vowels in the first line of the couplet. The second line uses a terminal “T,” changed to “D” by Samdhi, to separate the dipthong vowels, a traditional notation in grammar used to mark an individual letter. Thus “E,” “AI,” “O,” and “AU,” become “Ed,” “AId,” “Od,” and “AUd.” Then, the word “Iti” is used to denote that this is the end of the list. The verse thus says that there are 16 initial vowels to be learned, and they are:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{a a3 i i3 u u3 r r3 l l3 e e3 o o3 au} \\
\end{align*}
\]

The most well-known Shikṣa, is the Pāṇiniya Śikṣā. The text asserts that there are 21 vowels.

Although the Pāṇiniya Śikṣā does not enumerate which those 21 vowels are, commentators agree that the additional vowels are made up by the plutas of dipthongs e, ai, o, and au and vocalic r as the fifth. Thus Pāṇiniya Śikṣā’s list of 21 vowels is:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{a a3 i i3 u u3 r r3 l l3 e e3 o o3 au} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Finally, a fragment of an ancient Shikṣa text by Vasīṣṭha claims that there are 26 vowels:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{a a3 i i3 u u3 r r3 l l3 e e3 o o3 au} \\
\end{align*}
\]
This is the expansion of the eight Svara into the full range of vowels in the Sanskrit alphabet. The vowels, arising from their source in “A,” in turn give rise to the consonants.

V. VOWELS AND CONSONANTS

Investigation into the foundation of knowledge of the ancient Vedic civilization, the study of pure knowledge, Veda, is called “Vedic Study.” Vedic Study, Maharishi explains, is not the study of anything outside of oneself. It is the study of the Self, the Ātmā. The Self reverberates and expresses itself in the one eternal sound, “A,” and then the one sound, “A,” is seen for its eight-fold values in the eight basic Svara, which expand to create all the vowels. Finally, in the full expansion of the sound “A,” there is the formation of consonants from the vowels. The expansion of “A” to all the vowels, and then to the consonants, expresses the collapsing of the abstract to the concrete, the collapsing of infinity to its own point; this is the dynamics of human consciousness, expanding and contracting, reverberating back and forth between its unbounded cosmic status, and its localized finite point value; in this dynamism of reverberation of the Self, the study of the Veda becomes meaningful. Maharishi explains the investigation of the Vedic sounds as the exploration of the relationship between vowels and consonants:

When you study the Vedic Literature, then first you study the vowels and consonants, then you study the gaps between vowels and the consonants. This is studying the nature of the Self. And when you study the nature of the Self, you see that the Self reverberates in terms of its own reverberations and they are the Svara; they are the reverberations of Ātmā. And they are the vowels.

There are two values in the language, one is vowel and one is consonant—vowels and consonants. This is Vedic Literature, this Vedic language made of vowels—that means reverberations of the Self itself. . . . It is a beautiful sequentially evolving reality of how the singularity of Ātmā, the singularity of the Self-Referral intelligence multiplies itself. It multiplies itself as the first syllable—eight syllables—and from there they become the consonants. Consonants are Vyañjana, we call it, Svara and Vyañjana.
Svara means reverberations of the Self, reverberations of the Total Natural Law, Ātmā, consciousness. And they then extend into the consonants. Consonants are the syllables where the vowels are attached to other words. Ka, Kha, Ga, Gha. Always “A,” “A,” “A,” “A.” Ka, Kha, Ga, Gha, Ta, Tha, Da, Dha, Pa, Pha, Ba. Always “A,” “A,” “A.” “A” is the first Svara, the first vowel. The first vowel “A” is the flow of silence. “Aaaaaaaaaa.” It is sound that carries the character of the infinite value of unified wholeness—“Aaaaaaaaaaa.” “Iiiiiiiiiiiiiiii.” So “A” stands for silence; “I” stands for dynamism. Like that, the whole conception and the emergence of one syllable from the other syllable—one within the other—huge infinity, and the point of infinity also has the total concentrated value of the Self.24

Here Maharishi has given an expanded microscopic view of the totality of knowledge contained in the first letter of the Sanskrit alphabet, “A”: What he called, in his analogy, the hum of the marketplace, which was like a roar from a distance, has been resolved, on closer approach, first into the different vowels and then into vowels and consonants, all participating together in the eternal flow of silence. This is how Maharishi explains the ultimate source of all the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet in the silence of the Self, or Ātmā. The different consonants of the Sanskrit alphabet have been classified and systematized by the authors of the various Śhikṣā texts.

VI. CONSONANTS

Consonants are called Vyañjana in Sanskrit. Although there was a considerable range of opinion as to the number of vowels, there is much less diversity of opinion as to how many consonants there are. Here is Gautama’s presentation of the consonants:25

\[
\text{atha trayas-triṁśad vyāñjanāni bhavanti, sparśāntasthoṣmāṇaś ceti}
\]

Gautama asserts that there are 33 consonants, and that consonants are of three kinds, Sparśha, (full contact consonants), Antahstha (semi-vowels), and Ūṣhmāṇa (sibilants).26

1. **Sparśha (full contact) consonants.** Gautama begins by defining the Sparśha, or contact consonants:
The letters starting with the letter “Ka” and ending with the letter “Ma” are the Sparśha, and they are twenty-five in number. This apparently alludes to the traditional recitation of the alphabet, in which there are five rows or vargas of five consonants each:

क ख ग घ ड
च छ ज भ ज
ट ठ ड ढ ङ
त थ द ध न
प फ ब भ म
ka kha ga gha ńa
cha chha ja jha ńa
ta tha da ńa
ta tha da ńa
pa pha ba bha ma

Gautama enumerates them differently, separating out the nasal sounds as a separate category within the set of Sparśha. His listing nevertheless starts with “Ka” and ends with “Ma”:

ॐथानन्त्या विंशतिर्भवन्ति वेक चचतुष्प्रा: खछठथफा
गजददवा चम्फटि धायश्यात्तष्ठान्त्या: पञ्च तेन डज्ञश्चाश्रेष्ठति

athaṇantyā vinśatīr bhavanti te ka-ca-ṭa-ta-pāh kha chha ṭha tha phā
ga ja ḍa da bā gha jha ḍha dha bhāścetathāṇtyāḥ paṇca te ńa ńa ńanamāśceti

Āpishali, Pāri and Ātreya²⁷ present the Sparśha in verse form:

कस्वो गंधो डचछजा भजो टठइहा शतो
थदो धतो फफवभा म: स्पर्श्च: पञ्चविंशति:
ka-khau ga-ghau ńa-cha-chha-jā jha-ńau ṭa-ṭha-ḍa-ḍhā ńa-tau
The Pratyāhāra Sūtra of Vedic grammar present the 25 Sparśha in six separate Sūtra.28 The nasals are presented separately, as one group; the next three Sūtra are devoted to the Ghoṣha or voiced consonants: Two of these three Sūtra are devoted to the voiced aspirated consonants, and then the third one to the voiced unaspirated consonants; finally, eight out of the ten unvoiced, Aghoṣha consonants are listed in one Sūtra starting with the five aspirated consonants; “Ka” and “Pa” are given their own final Sūtra, thus completing the presentation of the Sparśha consonants:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Jambhānām} \\
\text{Bham} \\
\text{Ghadhāṣṭ} \\
\text{Jabgadḍasū} \\
\text{Kapya} \\
\text{ña-ma-ña-ña-nam} \\
\text{jha-bhaṅ} \\
\text{gha-dha-dhaś} \\
\text{ja-ba-ga-da-daś} \\
\text{kha-phā-cha-tha-tha-ca-ṭa-tav} \\
\text{ka-pay}
\end{align*}
\]

Finally, a Sūtra from Taittirīya Prātiṣṭhākhyā sums up the Sparśha consonants:29

\[
\text{Oṣadhyā: पद्विचः शति स्पर्शाः:} \\
\text{ādyāḥ pañcaviṁśati sparśāḥ}
\]

The first group of consonants are these 25 full contact consonants called “Sparśha.”
2. Antaḥstha Consonants (semivowels). The second group of consonants that Gautama mentions while defining “Vyañjana” are the Antaḥstha consonants. Antaḥstha are stationed (stha) in the middle (antar) between vowels and consonants. They do not have the full contact of the Sparśha consonants, nor the free flow of the vowel sounds; they are called semi-vowels in English. Gautama says there are four, and they are “Ya,” “Ra,” “La” and “Va”:30

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{chatvāro’ntasthās te ya-ra-la-vāḥ} \\
\text{Vasishṭha agrees that there are four:31} \\
\text{chatvāraś cha tathāntasthāḥ} \\
\text{Āmareśhi says similarly:32} \\
\text{chatasro yādayo’ntasthāḥ} \\
\text{Āpishali, Ātreya and Pāri phrase it metrically:33} \\
\text{ya-rau la-vau catasro’ntasthāś cha} \\
\text{Yājñavalkya further describes their qualities:34} \\
\text{chatvāryantasthā ya-ra-la-vāḥ kapilavānā agnidaivatyāḥ} \\
\text{In the Pratyāhāra Śūtra of Vedic grammar, the letter “Ha” is added to the group, although it is not being classed as a semi-vowel. There are two Śūtra:35} \\
\text{hyvr( l, } \\
\text{ha-ya-va-raḥ laḥ} \\
\text{The Taittirīya Prāthīkhya sums up in one Śūtra:36}
\end{align*}
\]
3. Ùśhman Consonants (sibilants and ha). The final class of “Vyañjana” consonants identified by Gautama are called Úṣmāṇa (Úṣhmāṇa). Gautama says that there are four Ùśhman letters, “Ha,” “Śa,” “Sa” and “Sa”:37

Yajñavalkya gives the traditional sequence of these four Ùśhman letters:38

A similar treatment is found in the Pratyåhåra Såtra, where the last two Såtra are devoted to these four Ùśhman letters:39

It is interesting to note that the Pratyåhåra Såtra list the letter “Ha” twice, once as the first of the antaḥstha (semivowel) class, and then again here, directly following the three sibilants.

By contrast, Vasishṭha, Pāri, Āpishali, Ātreya, and the Taittirīya Prātishākhya all declare that there are six Ùśhman letters. Vasishṭha says:40

Ātreya, Pāri and Āpishali all identify what the six are with the same metrical expression:41
Visarga is a breath following a vowel sound, that may be pronounced at the completion of a word. Ancient Indian phoneticians noticed that if the breath or Visarga was pronounced directly before a following “Ka,” then the closing or choking down of the throat tended to make the Visarga take on a sort of rasping throat sound as the breath rushed by the root of the tongue. They called this transformed Visarga, pronounced immediately before a guttural “Ka” or “Kha,” Jihvāmūliya. Jihvā means tongue, and Mūla means root, so the name means “pronounced at the root of the tongue.”

Phoneticians also noticed that if the Visarga is pronounced directly before a following “Pa,” then the closing of the lips created a distinctive sort of blowing sound. This transformed visarga is called Upadmāniya. In ancient Vedic language, these two sounds, Jihvāmūliya and Upadmāniya are considered different letters, different from the ordinary Visarga. They are even given their own symbols. Sometimes they are represented by two different symbols, ∞ and ∼ but more commonly they are both represented by the same symbol ∞ since the context, namely the following “Ka,” or “Kha,” or “Pa,” or “Pha,” makes obvious which of the two is intended. In recent times, the use of a special symbol to denote Jihvāmūliya and Upadmāniya has become infrequent, even in Vedic texts, and the two dots of the Visarga are often used even when the Jihvāmūliya and Upadmāniya are intended. In the above metrical phrase, the Visarga preceding the letter “Ka” is the Jihvāmūliya and the Visarga preceding the letter “Pa” is the Upadmāniya. The letters “Ka” and “Pa” are here used by the seers only to show the special nature of the Visarga sounds; “Ka” and “Pa” are not themselves considered part of the series of Ūshman letters. Thus, according to Ātreya, Pāri and Āpishali, the Ūshman letters are:
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47

x W s h, (ßha ∑ha sa ha), jihvāmūliya and upadhāmāniya.42

Taittirīya Prātiśākhya agrees with Ātreyā, Pāri and Āpīshali in declaring the number of the Īṣhman letters as six:43

परे षट्प्रकाशः:
pare śha d uṣhmāṇah

Ṛk Veda Prātiśākhya declares the Īṣhman letters to be eight:

उत्तरेष्ठ्र ऊष्प्रकाशः:
uttareśṭa uṣhmāṇah

Commentators elaborate that these eight Īṣhman letters are ha, śha śha sa, Visarga, Jihvāmūliya, Upadhāmāniya and Anusvara.44

These three groups, Sparśha, Antaḥstha and Īṣhman comprise the consonants in the Sanskrit alphabet.

VII. ADDITIONAL LETTERS: CHODITA AND YAMA

4. Choditas. There is another class of letters, according to Āpishali, called the Chodita. The word Chodita comes from the root “cud,” to impel, incite, cause to move quickly. All are derived from the quick or sudden movement of the breath in the throat, nose or mouth. There are five Chodita sounds. The class of six Īṣhman letters is the first; the Visarga is the second; the Anusvara is the third, the retroflex “La,” is the fourth, and the class of sounds called Anunāsikya or simply Nāsya, make up the fifth. These are described by Āpishali and Pāri, in one line:45

विसर्गानन्दस्वरालाष्ट्राननासिक्याः पद्च चोदिता: ६
visargānusvāralāṣṭhānānāsikyaḥ pañcha choditāḥ 6
The list presents four Chodita letters, although counting five: Visarga, anusvāra, “La,” and Anunāsikya. Āpishali and Pāri raise the number to five in a subsequent verse by adding the six Īśmaṇa letters as one member of the group of five Choditas:46

श्वाष्ट्राभिषेकम् विसर्गोनुस्बारो छो नास्यप्रवक्तम् ५

The Īśmaṇa letters and Visarga have already been described.

The Anusvāra or “Aṁ,” is handled differently in each of the four Vedas, and the name and symbol are often pre-empted in the later classical literature as a short-hand for a final nasal, or a nasalized vowel. However, the pure Anusvāra is something different.

L. Aravind explains the pure Vedic Anusvāra:

The Śaunaka, Māṇḍūkya, Pāṇini and other authorities have declared that the Anusvāra “M” in its original state is a voiced sound involving only the Nāsika and no other oral articulation (e.g. anusvāra yamāṇāṁ cha nāsikā sthānaṁ uchyate). This differentiates it from the other Anunāsikas such as “ma,” “na,” “nā,” and “ṅa,” which are sounds with specific oral articulations that are, tinged with passage of air through the nasal cavity. In the pure Anusvāra the mouth is kept naturally closed without forming any particular articulation and the air is allowed to pass, superficial contacting the oral cavity into the nasal cavity. However, it does not pass into the oral cavity to resonate within it.47

The Anusvāra is considered to be purely a nasal sound, i.e., air is moving through the nostrils only during the pronunciation of Anusvāra. A quite different treatment of Anusvāra is found in some recensions of Yajur-Veda, Abhyankar explains. The Anusvāra may be treated “As a kind of consonant of the type of nasalized half “Ga,” (गम) as described in some treatises of the Yajur-veda Prātiśākhya.”48

The Anunāsikya is uttered through the nose and mouth both, as different from the Anusvāra which is uttered only through the nose. The five nasals डज़्जश्नम (ṇa ṇa ṇa na m) of the Sparśha class are considered Anunāsikya; three of the four semi-vowels, “Ya,” “La,” and “Va,” and all the vowels may all be nasalized, becoming
Anunāsikya. These Anunāsikya semi-vowels and vowels are marked with chandrabindu ॻ. The remaining Chodita is a retroflex “La.” The retroflex “La,” ಲ is substituted in the ancient Vedic language for the retroflex ಲ (Da) when the “Da” is preceded and followed by a vowel. The verb Ṛde (≡े) which is the second word of Rik Veda, “I adore,” is changed to Ṛle (≡े). These five, Īśmāṇa, Visarga, Anusvāra, ಲ, (La) and Anunāsikya, are the five Chodita described by Āpishali and Pāri.

5. Yama. There is another very important group of letters, called the Yama.

According to a contemporary dictionary writer, a Yama is:

one of a pair, a twin letter available in pronunciation before a nasal letter and similar to it, when the nasal consonant is preceded by any one of the four consonants of the five classes; the Yama is a transitional sound intervening between a non-nasal and the following nasal, as a counterpart of the non-nasal. In the conjunct “gn” in agnim, for example, the letter “Ga” succeeds in bringing the flow of speech to a complete stop. In order to pronounce the “Na,” some vibration must first be supplied to the voice box or larynx. This momentary stirring of sound in the voice box is considered to be a letter in its own right, called a Yama. There are four different kinds of Yama, according to whether the consonant preceding the nasal is hard or soft, aspirated or unaspirated. Yājnavalkya describes the Yama very succinctly, giving four examples, and the four names of the Yama:

क्म रूम ग्म ध्म कुं खुं गुं घुं हति यमाश्वत्वारः
kma khma gma dhma kum khu gu ghum iti yamashvatarah

Gautama describes in detail the unique position of the Yama with respect to a preceding consonant and following nasal:

ऋघान्त्या विशेषतिर्भवति ते कच्चतपा: खछठथफा
ऋघान्त्या विशेषतिर्भवति ते कच्चतपा: खछठथफा

Gautama describes in detail the unique position of the Yama with respect to a preceding consonant and following nasal:
Gautama says:

Now, the non-final letters (Anantya)(of the five Vargas or rows of consonants) are 20: They are Ka, Ca, Ŭa, Ta, Pa; Kha, Cha, Ūha, Tha, Pha; Ga, Ja, Îa, Da, Ba, and Gha, Jha, Îha, Dha, and Bha.

Now, the final letters (Antya)(of the five Vargas) are five:
They are Na, Ūa, Na, Na and Ma.

Now, the non-final letters are of four kinds, corresponding to four Yama, Kūm, Khuṃ, Guṃ, and Ghuṃ.

When a non-final letter is conjunct with a final letter, then in the gap before the final, but after the non-final letter, when there is no pause between the final and non-final letter, there the Yama reside without doubt.50

Starting from pure consciousness, Ātmā, this chapter has examined the emergence of the alphabet from pure silence, starting with the expression of the first sound, the first letter of the alphabet, “A.” The first letter, “A,” was seen to contain all the letters of the alphabet in seed form. The first sound, “A,” gave rise to the eight Svara, which in turn gave rise to all the vowels. The vowels in turn gave rise to the progressively collapsing sequence of consonants, the semivowels, the sibilants, and finally the full contact consonants or Sparśha. The furthest limit of this progression may be seen in the Yama. The Yama are not so much distinct letters, as a tangible manifest expression of the gap between letters, that value which holds two sounds together. The gap holding two sounds together reveals the underlying continuum of speech, the continuum of the sound “A,” that was the starting point of speech. The gap points to the continuum that is here made manifest as vibration: Here in the gap between letters, there is yet a sign of that unmanifest value of speech, the source of speech, consciousness, Ātmā. It may be
inferred that by bringing the attention to the existence of this phase of speech, the Yamas,
Gautama is laying out to vision the existence of a greater value of Yama, Yama the
administrator: Organizing the collapse and emergence of successive sounds—the death
and rebirth of sounds, one might say—Yama is found administering the entire field of
speech by organizing the joining together of innumerable syllables into one continuum of
flow of the totality of life. Thus it is seen that the alphabet letters called Yama may be
understood as the organizing power of the mind made tangible; at once silent and
dynamic, they exude the nature of unmanifest pure Transcendental Consciousness, that is
the ultimate source of all the letters of the alphabet. Not carrying meaning, they remain
unnoticed, but by energizing the gap, the field of transformation between letters, they are
responsible for the diversity of expressions on the surface of speech.

The Choditas and the Yamas are the final two groups of letters of the Sanskrit
alphabet to be learned. With this knowledge of the whole range of the Sanskrit alphabet
as taught by the sages who wrote the ancient Šikṣā texts, it is now possible to count the
letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, and the various discrepancies in the numbers of letters
propounded in different texts can be understood.

VIII. THE SANSKRIT ALPHABET

Maharishi has described the Sanskrit Alphabet as a perfect system of
quantification of totality. The infinite continuum of the total potential of Natural Law,
reverberating in the Self, gets quantified in speech, when the fully opened mouth,
expressing the continuum of the sound “A,” the infinity of Being, is progressively
collapsed down to a point in the sound “Ka,” in which the vibrations of sound are
completely nil, and the breath is completely stopped—speech is brought to a standstill. It
has been seen how systematically, in this collapse of infinity into a point, from “A” into
“Ka,” from the abstract to the concrete, all the sounds of the Vedic alphabet emerge
sequentially. From the starting point of “A,” first the eight Svara emerge, expanding to all the vowels, and then from the vowels, the different classes of consonants emerge.

The Sanskrit alphabet is called “Varṇa-samāmnāya,” which means traditional collection of the letters of the Vedic alphabet. Collections of letters are found in the ancient Shikṣā texts written by the great Maharshis of previous ages, and in the Prātishākhya of the various Veda, and in the text of Vedic grammar. These ancient texts often give more elaborate, more detailed and precise presentations of the alphabet, than the traditional recitations taught in schools and colleges. The traditional recitation of the Sanskrit alphabet involves 48 letters. (Please refer to Table 1, Varna Samāmnaya.)

Vāśiṣṭha presents a Vedic alphabet of 68 letters, Pāṇini suggests that there are 63 or 64 letters. (Please refer to Table 2, Pāṇini’s alphabet.) Ātreya counts 59 letters, while Āpishali and Pāri list 56 letters each. The Taïtiriya Prātishākhya presents 51 letters, (Table 3), while in the Pratyāhāra Śūtra of Vyākaraṇa, (Table 4) only 42 are given. His Holiness Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, in the context of comparing the Vedic alphabet to the 64 codons of the genetic code, suggested that there were 64 letters in the Vedic alphabet. (Please refer to Table 2). However in the context of learning the alphabet in order to enter into the reading and recitation of the Vedic Literature, he has set a number of 52 letters in the Vedic alphabet. 52 The 52 letter Vedic alphabet includes the 48 sounds of the Varna Samāmnāya (Table 1) augmented by Jihvāmūlīya and Upadhmānīya, and the retroflex semi-vowels “La” and “Łha.” (Please refer to Table 5: 52 Letter Alphabet.) This is the syllabary to be learned by students in the Vedic Literature reading program.

The Vedic texts provide a number of additional orthographic peculiarities: There are accents that are noted differently and pronounced differently in the four Vedas; and in Yajur Veda there are a variety of symbols for Visarga, and Anusvāra. These will be reviewed, starting with the Vedic accents.
Table 1: Varṇa Samāmnaya
Traditional Recitation of the Sanskrit Alphabet

वर्णसमाप्रय

a ā i ī u ū ṛi ṛi ṛṛi
e ē o au am ah
k kh g ḡ dg
ka kha ga gha ŋa
cha chha ja jha ŋa
ṭ ṭha ḍa ḍha ŋa
ta tha da dha na
pa pha ba bha ma
y r l v x Ṙ ha Šha sa ha
Table 2: Pāṇini's Alphabet

Based on Pāṇiniya Śhikṣā

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Table 3: Taittirīya Prātiśākhya’s Alphabet

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| ka | kha | ga | gha | ṃa | cha | chha | ja | jha | ṇa | ta | tha | da | dha | na | pa | pha | ba | bha | ma |

| य | र | ल | व | श | ष | स | ह | यः | रः | लः | वः | शः | षः | सः | हः |
| ya | ra | la | va | Šha | Šha | sa | ha | ψ | χ | ψ | χ | ψ | χ | ψ | χ | ψ | χ | ψ | χ | ψ | χ | ψ |

jīvāṁtiśya upadhmāṇiśya aḥ aṃ aṅ
Table 4: Pratyāhāra Sūtra of Vyākaraṇa

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Table 5: 52-Letter Vedic Alphabet of the Vedic Literature Reading Curriculum

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<td>ya</td>
<td>ra</td>
<td>la</td>
<td>va</td>
<td>śha</td>
<td>śha</td>
<td>sa</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

jāhmānīya  upadhānīya  ḷa ḷha
IX. VEDIC LETTERS AND MARKS

1. Vedic Accents. The Ṛik Veda is chanted, and there are different tones or accents that are traditionally marked in the text. The three accents in the Ṛik Veda are the Udātta, the Anudātta, and the Svarita. The Anudātta, or un-raised pitch is the low tone. It is marked with a horizontal line below the syllable. The Svarita is a high pitch, or sliding note; it is marked with a vertical line above the syllable. The Udātta or raised tone, is not marked; also unaccented syllables are not marked. The first verse of Ṛik Veda looks as follows with these accent markings:

ран्गिर्मीचे पुरोहितं यज्ञस्य देवमृत्विज्ञाम् । होतारं रक्षार्थम् ॥

Ṛik Veda also has what is called a Kampa accent, which may be short or long, and is written accordingly with a 1 or a 3, having both a Svarita accent above the number, and an Anudatta accent mark below. An example is shown from Sūkta 2, verse 6:

मुद्धिशुश्त्था धिया नरा ॥

The Śāma Veda Saṁhitā uses an entirely different system of notation. The Udātta accent is written as a “1” above the syllable. The Svarita accent is written as a “2” above the syllable. The Anudatta is written as a “3” above the syllable. “2U” and “2R” are additional kinds of Svarita accents, called appropriately Svarita U and Svarita Ra. “3K” is a special Anudatta accent called Anudātta Ka, and finally there is a Sāmavedic U accent written as an “U” above the syllable. The first verse of Śāma Veda looks as follows with these accent markings:

१ ऋगम ओ याहि वीते गृषानो हन्यदातेये

The Atharva Veda uses accent markings similar to those of Ṛik Veda, with the
addition of the Jātya Svarita accent, which is an unusual flourish: ˝ The first verse of Atharva Veda looks as follows, with a Jātya Svarita accent just past the middle of the second line:

ये त्रिस्पर्शः परियन्ति विश्रां रूपाशि विश्रः।
वाचस्पतिर्वर्ता तेषां तुन्वोऽश्रवं दंढातुः मे ॥ ११॥

The Śukla Yajur Veda accentuation system includes a symbol for a Jātya Svarita that is like a cursive “w,” written below the syllable; there is also an Antargami Anudātta, a horizontal line below the syllable, that has a short vertical hook attached on the left side; and the symbol for Anudatta in Śukla Yajur Veda notation is a curved horizontal line below the syllable, rather than a straight line. Verse 11 of the first chapter is shown as an example:

भृतार्य त्वा नारात्ते स्वरभिविर्वायैष्युद्वहः हन्तान्द्रयाँह प्रथिताय
मुवर्तारित्त्रमन्वैमि
प्रथितायास्त्वा नाभी सादयाम्यदित्यात्पत्तेः हन्वः राँच ११

The Kṛṣṇa Yajur Veda accentuation system varies in different recensions. The Taittirīya typically uses the system employed for Rik Veda. Kāṭhaka marks a Svarita with a caret below the syllable.⁵⁴

Anudātta is marked with a vertical line below the syllable.

The Jātya Svarita is marked with a curved horizontal line below the syllable:
CHAPTER 2: THE VEDIC ALPHABET

This latter mark is also used by Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā. Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā, although following largely the accentuation system of Rīk Veda, also uses a special Svarita mark consisting of three vertical lines above the syllable.\(^{55}\)

There is also a “Sentence-ending” Udāṭta consisting of two dots below the syllable, used in texts of Kṛṣṇa Yajur-Veda:\(^{56}\)

2. **Visarga.** Šukla Yajur Veda utilizes several additional marks for Visarga, the breath-like or “ha” sound at the end of words. These different marks provide information regarding accentuation and associated hand-movements. The first Visarga looks like a division sign, and is used when the Visarga follows the Svarita accent. Here is an example from verse 1 of Šukla Yajur Veda:

\[
\text{हुषे त्वोंरं त्वा वायः स्थ देवो वं सविता प्राप्येतु श्रेष्ठतमाय}
\]

The Visarga that have a semi-circle facing left or right, positioned around the upper or lower dot signal that the hand moves up or down, or left or right. Here is an example from verse 17:

\[
\text{यम्यरिघिम्पूर्धत्त्राः स्म्रै देव पारिभिर्गुह्मानि}
\]

3. **Anusvāra.** There are more than half a dozen symbols for the Anusvāra. The Anusvāra is usually written as a dot above the line of the syllable it follows. However, in the Taittirīya branch of Kṛṣṇa Yajur Veda, as well as in Sāma Veda, the Anusvāra is written differently. It is written as a Chandra-bindu, written slightly below, and following
the horizontal line of the preceding syllable; it has a *Virāma* or halant written below it. Here is an example from the second verse of the *Taittirīya Samhitā*.

युज्यस्य घोषदसिः प्रत्युष्टः रचः:

In *Yajur Veda* there is a special *Anusvāra* that signals that thumb and forefinger touch briefly: This is shown below with some of its common variants:

\[ \text{तः} \quad \text{तः} \quad \text{तः} \quad \text{तः} \quad \text{तः} \]

There is a special *Anusvāra* used when the above *Anusvāra* follows short *Mātrās*, and is followed in turn by the letters “Śha,” “Sha,” “Sa,” “Ha,” or “Ri.”

\[ \text{तः} \]

Some other symbols for *Anusvāra* are:

\[ \text{तः} \quad \text{तः} \quad \text{तः} \quad \text{तः} \]

Here is an example showing the use of different *Anusvāras*, from verse 1 of chapter 4 of *Śāukla Yajur Veda*:

\[ \text{तु०} \quad \text{कृम्यामाथ्यां} \quad \text{सुन्तरन्तो} \quad \text{वर्जुर्विमी} \quad \text{रायस्योर्च्छ} \quad \text{समिष्ठा} \quad \text{मंदेम} \]

\[ \text{हुमाउँग्रापुरे} \quad \text{शां} \quad \text{में} \quad \text{सन्तु} \quad \text{देवीरोपेक्षे} \quad \text{त्रायस्व} \quad \text{स्वर्धिते} \quad \text{मेनेख} \]

\[ \text{हिहृ सीहे} \]

4. Special “*Ya*” in śūkla Yajur Veda. One can see in the above line, that there is an unusual letter “*Ya,*” that has an oblique line drawn through it: य This occurs frequently in śūkla Yajur Veda. This letter is used to represent a “*Ya,*” which although grammatically a true “*Ya,*” is pronounced as “*Ja.*”

These are the special symbols used to represent Vedic Sanskrit. (Please refer to Table 6: Special Vedic Characters).
Table 6: Special Vedic Characters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special Vedic Characters</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>कुं खुं गुं घुं चुं छुं घञं चञं</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kũ khuµ guµ ghµ lµ lha ya/ja</td>
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Anusvāra: 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anusvāra Characters</th>
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<tr>
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Visarga: 

<table>
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<tr>
<td>तह तह तह तह तह तह</td>
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Vedic Accents

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<th>Vedic Accents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>च्र च्र छ्र छ्र</td>
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<tr>
<td>RgVeda Svarīta RgVeda Anudātta Short Kampa Long Kampa</td>
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<tr>
<th>Vedic Accents</th>
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<tr>
<td>च्र च्र छ्र छ्र</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anudātta Antargami Anudātta Svarīta Jātya Svarīta</td>
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<tr>
<td>च्र च्र छ्र छ्र</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maitrāya Jātya Svarīta Maitrāya Jātya Svarīta Maitrāya Jātya Sentence Ending Udātta</td>
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<table>
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<th>Vedic Accents</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>च्र च्र छ्र छ्र</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sāma Veda Udātta Sāma Veda Svarīta Sāma Veda &quot;Svarīta &quot; Sāma Veda &quot;Svarīta u&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vedic Accents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>च्र च्र छ्र छ्र</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sāma Veda Anudātta Sāma Veda &quot;Anudātta Ka&quot; Sāma Veda &quot;U&quot; Atharva Veda Jātya Svarīta</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
X. THE VALUE OF READING VEDIC LITERATURE

The alphabet emerges sequentially from the eternal continuum of the sound “A,” through the eight Svara, and the evolution of all the vowels, to the semi-vowels and sibilants, and finally to the full contact consonants, called Sparśha. The underlying theme has been that “A” is the reverberation of one’s own consciousness when it is awake in itself, when it is referring only to itself, not to anything outside of itself: self-referral consciousness, reverberating within itself between the unbounded infinite continuum of its own nature, and the restricted finite point of its own nature, systematically gives rise to the sequentially unfolding sounds of the Vedic alphabet. The sounds of the Vedic Literature are the reverberations of the Ātmā, the reverberations of one’s own Self.

Reading Vedic Literature is a procedure, which combined with direct experience of the Self through the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique, enlivens in individual human awareness the dynamics of evolution of consciousness, the mechanics whereby consciousness, the field of total natural law, expresses itself in the material world and creates the diverse universe. Having seen how the Vedic sounds emerge systematically from the field of consciousness, the field of the Self, Maharishi’s vision of the culturing of perfection through the recitation of the Vedic Literature can be understood: Maharishi sums up his theme of unfolding the latent potential of the individual through recitation of the sounds of the Vedic Literature as follows:

Life is expressed through words. Vedic chanting are the words of consciousness—consciousness reverberates. So the Self of everyone is the consciousness of everyone. So Vedic Sounds—Vedic Mantras we call it to distinguish it from other sounds, ordinary sounds—so these are the Mantras from the Transcendental Field. They are the reverberations of the self-referral consciousness. And the whole physical universe is the expression of these sounds, these vibrations. It is not a matter of belief.

When you study the sounds of the mantras and you study the gaps between sounds, then you understand that the reverberations of these sounds, they are the speech of the Self. It is the Ātmā that reverberates. It is called Svara. It is called...
the reverberations of Ātmā, it is called the reverberations of the Self. So Vedic reverberations of the Self, they are always at the basis of the evolutionary impulse of activity, evolutionary. That is why they are always soothing, because they are the generators of evolution, the generators of evolution.60

“Generating evolution” is the goal of the program of reading the Vedic Literature. This revered goal of raising life to perfection, unfolding the infinite potential of the human nervous system, is possible to attain, because the infinite dynamism of the Ātmā, which is the energy, intelligence and organizing power at the basis of the whole Creation, is structured in the sounds of the Vedic alphabet.

XI. THE RICHÓ AKŠHARE VERSE FROM ṚIK VEDA.

The program of reading the Vedic Literature is based upon the Sanskrit Alphabet. This chapter has systematically presented the sounds of the Vedic alphabet, and the Devanāgarī script used to represent those sounds. But rather than starting with the first letter of the Sanskrit alphabet, and proceeding through the various letters of the Classical Sanskrit, and ancient Vedic alphabets, this chapter began with a discussion of the source of alphabet, the source of thought, pure consciousness. In subsequent sections, the entire alphabet was unfolded as a sequential collapse of infinity onto a point: The fully open throat, characteristic of the sound “A,” collapsing, contracting more and more, moving through all the vowels, the semi-vowels, the sibilants, and the full consonants, until the continuum of sound represented by the first letter, “A,” has been completely brought to a stop, arrested in a point. And even the farthest most remote point from this beginning “A,” the Yama, were seen as the representative of the underlying continuum of consciousness at the source of speech. This collapse of infinity onto a point, is called in Vedic Science the Kṣhara of “A,” the collapse of “A.” The word Akṣhara, which in Sanskrit means “letter,” also may be understood as A-kṣhara, the Kṣhara, collapse, of “A.”
When the alphabet is seen as the unfoldment of the inherent dynamism contained in the collapse of the continuum onto a point—that means when the alphabet is seen as the expression of the dynamics of one’s own infinite, eternal self-referral consciousness or Ātmā, collapsing onto its own point, and expanding again to infinity in an eternal reverberation—then it is seen that in the study of the alphabet, it is actually the source of alphabet, consciousness, that is of primary importance. The primacy of consciousness, unfolded for its full range of possibilities by the collapse of infinity onto a point, by the collapse, Kṣhara, of “A,” is the theme of understanding that is described in the *Richo Akṣhare* verse of Rik Veda. This one verse contains in seed form the knowledge of all disciplines. Faculty of Maharishi University of Management have developed *Richo Akṣhare* charts for all the major disciplines and their varied subdivisions. The charts show how the overall theme of knowledge in each discipline, and in its various branches can be organized in terms of the structure of knowledge unfolded in the *Richo Akṣhare* verse. This parallel between the structure of knowledge in the modern sciences, and in the ancient Vedic Science may be seen also in the study of the sounds of the Vedic language. Table 7 reviews the parallel between the knowledge of the alphabet and its source in Ātmā, and the theme of pure knowledge, total knowledge, contained in the *Richo Akṣhare* verse. Maharishi’s translation of the verse is used as the starting point.

In this way, the *Richo Akṣhare* verse shows how the understanding and experience of the Vedic alphabet as the expression of the dynamism of one’s own Ātmā, one’s own unbounded Self, is the gateway to unfolding the infinite potential of human existence and living life in Enlightenment. This understanding is the foundation for beginning the program of reading Vedic Literature. This explains why Maharishi has presented two components of Vedic study, side by side: Reading the Vedic Literature in
ONE VERSE OF RK VEDA (1.164.39)
CONTAINS ALL PRINCIPLES OF PHONETICS

VEDEC SCIENCE

Fulfillment of DISCIPLINE

PHONETICS

Table 7: Richo Akshare Chart
The Vedic Alphabet in One Verse of Ṛṇk Veda—Ṛṇk Veda 1.164.39

| The letters of the alphabet arise from the sequential closing of the fully open throat, characteristic of “A,” to its fully closed, choked down, full-stop character expressed in “Ka.” | The open sound, “A,” presents the unbounded continuum of pure consciousness, and the consonantal stop presents the point value, the arresting of that continuum in a point; the continuum of “A,” and the point of any consonant, “Ka,” reside in the inherent dynamism of consciousness, reverberating between infinity and point: they have their basis in the transcendental unmanifest field of speech. | All the letters of the Vedic alphabet emerge from the progressive sequential collapsing of the continuum of “A” onto its own point. | These Vedic sounds emerging from the collapse of “A,” go to participate in all the mantra of the Veda and all the verses of the Vedic Literature, encompassing the total knowledge and organizing power at the basis of the whole creation. |

**Table 7A: Richo Akṣhare Chart (first half)**
Without the experience of the Self awake in its own Nature, infinite and unbounded, eternally reverberating between infinity and point, the individual letters and words can only refer to limited, bound realities of the external world, they cannot tell the story of self-referral consciousness, Ātmā, ever creating infinite possibilities from within its own eternal Reality.

The letters of the Vedic alphabet, interpreted in terms of the manifest objects and activities of the phenomenal world, become fairy tales and myths, without any foundation; they lose their source in the infinite knowledge and organizing power of the Self. Reading the texts of Vedic Literature without experiencing pure consciousness through the regular practice of the Transcendental Meditation program is of little value because the reference to the infinite potential located deep within every human being is missing.

Those who experience pure consciousness and its self-referral fluctuations, enjoy the individual impulses of sound of the Vedic Literature as the self-referral transformations of their own pure consciousness; the qualities of each branch of Vedic Literature are awakened in their awareness by reading and hearing the text of that branch.

When all the different channels of consciousness represented by all the 40 branches of Veda and Vedic Literature have been experienced as the self-referral fluctuations of one’s own pure consciousness, then one’s own pure wakefulness is fully awake to the infinite possibilities within its own structure, and life is lived in affluence and abundance and perpetual bliss consciousness. This is life in enlightenment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YASTANNA VEDA</th>
<th>KIMRICA KARISHYATI</th>
<th>YA ITTADVIDUS</th>
<th>TA IME SAMASATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He whose awareness is not open to this field...</td>
<td>...what can the verses accomplish for him?</td>
<td>Those who know this level of reality...</td>
<td>...are established in evenness, wholeness of life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 7B: Richo Akṣhare Chart (second half)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letters</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Transliteration</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YASTANNA VEDA</td>
<td>He whose awareness is not open to this field...</td>
<td>YASTANNA VEDA</td>
<td>He whose awareness is not open to this field...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KIMRICA KARISHYATI</td>
<td>...what can the verses accomplish for him?</td>
<td>YA ITTADVIDUS</td>
<td>Those who know this level of reality...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA IME SAMASATE</td>
<td>...are established in evenness, wholeness of life.</td>
<td>TA IME SAMASATE</td>
<td>...are established in evenness, wholeness of life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
sequence, and experiencing one’s own self-referral consciousness through the practice of the Transcendental Meditation program. Without the experience of the unboundedness of the Self through the TM program, the power of the Vedic sounds for uplifting life, for generating evolution could not be practically realized.

Knowledge of the Vedic alphabet is prerequisite to entering into the examination of the actual sequence of texts to be read. The Vedic alphabet is the necessary foundation for reading the Vedic Literature from beginning to end. Chapter 9 returns to the theme of the emergence of the alphabet from the reverberations of the Self, the Ātmā, in order to analyze the mechanics underlying the effectiveness of the reading program for achieving life in enlightenment, spontaneously harnessing the infinite organizing power of Natural Law in every thought and action.

XI. CURRICULUM FOR READING THE VEDĀNGA

In the following chapters a model curriculum for reading the six Vedāṅga is presented. The curriculum is intended as a resource for teachers on the graduate, undergraduate and high school levels; it can also be used as a reader since there are sample readings from each of the texts of the Vedāṅga, presented in proper sequence, as well as graphic presentation of His Majesty King Nader Rām’s discovery of the correlate in the physiology of every text of the Vedāṅga.

In the doctoral program in Maharishi Vedic Science at Maharishi University of Management, students read through the entire Vedic Literature in two and a half years. At least three months (about 300 hours of reading) are usually devoted to Vedāṅga. On this schedule, students can read about one third of the full corpus of texts of Kalpa, and all of the five other branches of Vedāṅga, before proceeding to the texts of the remaining 30 branches of Vedic Literature. The curriculum of reading for the 30 branches following the Vedāṅga is presented in Appendix I.
In the undergraduate major in Maharishi Vedic Science at Maharishi University of Management, there is a series of four consecutive one-month courses devoted to reading the Vedânga. In the first month, students read all 36 texts of Śhikṣā. In the second month, they read excerpts of Kalpa and all of Vyākaraṇa, Vedic grammar, reading Pāṇini’s Aṣṭādhyāyī, as always, purely for its sound value, not for meaning. In the third month the students read the Nighaṇṭu and Nirukta, and the textbook of Chhandas, and in the fourth month they read through all of the Brihad Pārāśara Horā Šāstra, the main sourcebook of Jyotiśh.

In the upper school of Maharishi School of the Age of Enlightenment (9–12), situated on the campus of Maharishi University of Management, where Sanskrit study is part of the school curriculum, students become familiar with the reading process by reading the Bhagavad Gītā, the six Darśhana, and the fifteen principle Upaniṣhad. When these are completed, then usually in the senior year, they may begin reading Śhikṣā.

Many graduates of the undergraduate program in Maharishi Vedic Science, and graduates of the Masters program in Maharishi Vedic Science at Maharishi University of Management embark on reading through the total Vedic Literature on their own. Students in the “life” reading program generally read through all the available packages of knowledge as summarized in Chapters 3 through 8, and in Appendix I of this dissertation, and as presented in completeness on the website of Maharishi University of Management, at MUM.edu/vedicreserve.

It is intended that every student should profoundly own in his awareness the connection between the text of Vedic Literature and the corresponding fibre or structure in the physiology. Maharishi explains:

The entire Vedic Literature has been discovered as the structuring dynamics of Rīk Veda on one side and the structuring dynamics of the human physiology on the other side.
Therefore, the complete knowledge of the Veda and Vedic Literature—the complete knowledge of Natural Law—is vital for everyone who wants to enjoy daily life fully supported by Natural Law.

Maharishi Vedic University allows the student to identify himself with complete knowledge. Complete knowledge means intellectual understanding of the structures of knowledge available in the Vedic Literature and experience of consciousness, which is the common source of all these structures of knowledge.

The student identifies the structures of knowledge in the Vedic Literature with different areas of his own physiology. In this theme of study he identifies himself with the structure of total knowledge and spontaneously allows knowledge and its organizing power to be a living reality of his daily life.63

Similarly it is intended that the student should have a general knowledge of the trend of surface meaning of the text,64 as well as intellectual understanding of Maharishi’s one-word synopsis of the quality or theme of knowledge in that field. This background of knowledge will support and strengthen experiences that emerge from the practice of reading the Vedic Literature. In courses on reading the Vedic Literature in Sanskrit, the one-word synopsis, the correlate in the physiology, and the overall trend of meaning should be learned by each student as a framework for understanding his experiences of reading the texts, and these are presented for each text in the following chapters. It is hoped that bringing together all these points related to each text of Vedāṅga in one written curriculum will simplify and enrich the process of learning for teacher and student alike.

The six chapters of this dissertation devoted to the Vedāṅga are a model curriculum, that could in time be expanded to incorporate all the 40 branches of Veda and Vedic Literature. As a first step in that direction, a comprehensive descriptive bibliography of all the texts in the reading curriculum for the remaining branches of Vedic Literature is presented in Appendix I.
Notes:


2 Please refer to, for example, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi Vedic University Introduction, (India: Maharishi Prakashan, 1995), pp. 58–59.

3 Wallace, “The Physiological Effects of Transcendental Meditation.”


7 According to the American Heritage Dictionary, alphabet means the letters of a given language, arranged in the order fixed by custom; or it may mean the basic or elementary principles of anything. In Sanskrit, every consonant has “A” as a part of it. The collection of letters of the Sanskrit alphabet is therefore actually a collection of syllables, fundamentally different from the Roman alphabet. The word is nevertheless convenient and appropriate for referring to the ordered collection of sounds and symbols fixed by the custom of the language.


12 The identification of the eight Svara as the foundation of the expression of all the vowels and consonants of the Vedic language is the first bold stroke in Maharishi’s program to articulate a comprehensive science of Vedic phonetics. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi attributes the cognition of a comprehensive phonetic science based on the eight Svara to Madhuchchhandas Vaishvanitra, the cognizer of the first Sūkta of Rik Veda. Maharishi Open University, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, in “Maharishi’s Global Family Chat,” January 17, 2006. Synthesizing the whole of Vedic speech in terms of eight fundamental syllables is neither transparent nor obvious. For example, the occurrence of the Anusvara, “Aṅ,” in the list of Svara is surprising, because metrical patterns in Sanskrit recitation count it as a consonant. However, Rik Pratiṣṭhākhya allows that Anusvara may be either a Svara or Vyañjana. There is a traditional teaching that there are eight basic Svara, as evidenced, for example, by the existence of the Śikṣā text entitled Svarāśṭaka Śikṣā, included in Śikṣā Samgrahaḥ. That text lists “A,” “I,” “U,” “R,” “Li,” “E,” “AI,” “O,” and “AU,” and then says, ityaśṭau svarāḥ, “These are the eight vowels.” (sic.) Further elaboration of Maharishi’s systematic revival of the Vedic science of phonology is found in Chapter 9 of this dissertation.


14 Taittirīya Pratiṣṭhākhya I:5.

15 Āpishali Śikṣā, verse 7.

16 Ātreya Śikṣā, verses 2.2-3.1.

17 Pāri Śikṣā, verse 3.

18 The terminal “T” is used to mark an individual vowel, as distinct from others of the same Varṇa. Please refer to Pāṇini I.1.70.


21 Vāsiṣṭhī Śikṣā, belonging to Kṛṣṇa Yajur-Veda, verse 2
22 As described in these Śikṣā texts. More elaborate expansions are possible, taking into account the three pitches.


25 Gautami Śikṣā.

26 Gautami Śikṣā, verse 1.

27 Āpishali Śikṣā, verse 8; Pāri Śikṣā, verse 4; and Ātreya Śikṣā, verses 3.2 and 4.1.

28 Aṣṭādhyāyi, page 1.

29 Taittirīya Prātiśākhya, Sūtra 7.

30 Gautami Śikṣā 1.

31 Vāsiṣṭhi Śikṣā, belonging to Kṛśṇa Yajur-Veda, verse 2.

32 Āmareśhi Śikṣā, verse 13.

33 Āpishali Śikṣā, verse 9; Pāri Śikṣā, verse 5; and Ātreya Śikṣā, verse 4.2.

34 Tripāṭhi, Šrī Rāma Prasāda, Śikṣā Saṃgrahaḥ, (Varanasi, Sampurnand Sanskrit University, 1989)p. 27.

35 Aṣṭādhyāyi, page 1.

36 Taittirīya Prātiśākhya, Sūtra 8.

37 Gautami Śikṣā 1.


39 Aṣṭādhyāyi, page 1.
40 Vāsiṣṭhī Šikṣā, belonging to Kṛiṣṇa Yajur-Veda, verse 2.

41 Ātreya Šikṣā, verse 4.2, Pāri Šikṣā, verse 5; and Āpishali Šikṣā, verse 9.

42 Ātreya Šikṣā, verse 5, Pāri Šikṣā, verse 5; and Āpishali Šikṣā, verse 9.

43 Taïtirīya Prātiśākhya, Sūtra 9.

44 Verma, V., Rgveda-Prātiśākhya of Śaunaka along with Uvaṭabhāṣya, (Delhi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, 1986), 1:10, p. 53.

45 Āpishali Šikṣā, verse 6; Pāri Šikṣā, verse 2.

46 Āpishali Šikṣā, verse 9; Pāri Šikṣā, verse 5.


49 Abhyankar, p. 313.

50 Author’s translation.


53 “List of Vedic Accents,” Omkarananda Ashram Himalayas, April 24, 2006, < http://www.omkarananda-ashram.org/Sanskrit/vedicaccents.htm>. This page was previously given a more descriptive title, “Proposal to the Unicode Consortium for Additional Character Assignments to Accomodate Vedic texts.”

54 Omkarananda Ashram.

55 Omkarananda Ashram.
56 Omkaranaanda Ashram.

57 Omkaranaanda Ashram.

58 Omkaranaanda Ashram.

59 Omkaranaanda Ashram.


61 Richo Akshare charts for Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, and Physiology show that all the theories of modern science have their basis in the collapse of the unbounded abstract all-possibilities structure onto its own point value. Please refer to Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Celebrating Perfection in Education, (1997), p. 52 ff.


64 This recommendation was made explicit by Maharishi in conversations about the reading with John and Sara Konhaus. Private e-mail communications 1998–2000.
VEDIC LITERATURE
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