

Lesson 62.
The Alphabet
वर्ण-विचारः

A) Evolution of Sound.

As Sadhakas, let us introduce ourselves to the world of sounds.... शब्दप्रपञ्च । The cause of the world of *things*.... अर्थप्रपञ्च is परमेश्वर. In the context of sound, परमेश्वर is शब्दब्रह्मन् । The entire world is said to be born of शब्द ...शब्दप्राभव । Evolution is the result of the self movement स्पन्दन of Shiva-Shakti. The line of evolution is from the subtle to the gross. There are five stages to the emanation of sound.

1. The first is परा which is absolutely supreme and subtle. This can best be described as the storehouse from which inspirations would first emerge.
2. The second is पश्यन्ती which is less subtle but is still undifferentiated. This would be the inspiration that would eventually give rise to a thought or an idea.
3. The third is मध्यमा which is grosser and undifferentiated, though not articulate. This is actual thought process which goes into concretizing the idea.... a plan of action.
4. Articulate sound is called वैखरी which further takes two forms: subtle and gross. It is from that that all the letters वर्ण, words पद and sentences वाक्य are manifested. The subtle forms of these letters are the mantras. The gross takes the form of the language we use.

वर्णः is that form of sound which cannot be broken up further into smaller parts. It is therefore also called अक्षरम् । न क्षरति इति अक्षरम् । नाद or ध्वनिsoundcan never be destroyed. That अक्षरम्, when it is in a written form is called the वर्णः । Over a period of time both words have now become interchangeable.

अक्षर s, when put together to intelligently express thoughts and feelings is called the पद । A group of पद s form a वाक्य ; and वाक्य s put together so that another may understand what one wishes to express, then becomes language भाषा । The Sanskrit script, is called देवनागरी ।

B) वर्णाः

Let's go over the list of वर्णाः again. The divisions that you see below have been made by Panini and described in his 'Ashtadhyayi.' We need to study this so that we are better able to understand how Panini worked at his grammar.

स्वराः

अ, इ, उ, ऋ, लृ (ह्रस्वस्वराः) are pronounced in one matra (a measure of time almost equal to one second)

आ, ई, ऊ, ऋ, लृ, ए, ऐ, ओ, औ (दीर्घस्वराः) are pronounced in two matras

अ३, इ३, उ३, ऋ३, लृ३, ए३, ऐ३, ओ३, औ३ (प्लुतस्वराः).... used when calling out to someone and take more than two matras to be pronounced.

अयोगवाहाः so named by Panini.

अं (अनुस्वार)

अः (विसर्गः)

(I've spent about a trillion hours trying to find a symbol that looks like two smilies put together, one on top of the other, the top looking like a smile and the one below looking like a frown in the place of the visargas for the four alphabets listed below. Sorry. Don't have the software to create an image even. But I'm sure you'll be able to figure out what I mean. If any of you has; and can create an image, please will you send it to me at 'Queries' so that I may replace these four visargas with those?)

: क : ख (जिह्वामूलीयः)

: प : फ (उपध्मानीयः)

व्यञ्जनानि

वर्गीयव्यञ्जनानि

		1	2	3	4	5
कु इति पाणिनिः	(कवर्ग)	क्	ख्	ग्	घ्	ङ्
चु इति पाणिनिः	(चवर्ग)	च्	छ्	ज्	झ्	ञ्
टु इति पाणिनिः	(टवर्ग)	ट्	ठ्	ड्	ढ्	ण्
तु इति पाणिनिः	(तवर्ग)	त्	थ्	द्	ध्	न्
पु इति पाणिनिः	(पवर्ग)	प्	फ्	ब्	भ्	म्

(Secret revealed: It is good to remember the above 25 व्यञ्जनानि column-wise too. For example क् च् ट् त् प् etc.)

अवर्गीयव्यञ्जनानि

य्, र्, ल्, व् (अन्तःस्थाः)

श्, ष्, स्र्, ह् (ऊष्माणः)

ळ् क्ष्

ळ् क्ष् and लृ are not included in Panini's work, who dealt with only the language in use and not what is originally in the Vedas. But we shall keep them in anyway.... just so that we do not forget them.

उच्चारणम्

Your teacher will help you pronounce the स्वराः, अयोगवाहाः, and the व्यञ्जनानि । I'll just supply a table that you can refer to. The beauty here is that this classification works in various ways. It helps making and breaking sandhis, writing out words with अनुनासिक s and understanding the relationships of each "family group" ... how one letter can be substituted for another and ideas like that.... For example, you would have often seen both तत् and तद्. It also helps us understand why Parama Poojya Swamiji pronounces त्रयम्बकं यजामहे the way He does.

वर्णाः	उत्पत्तिस्थानि	स्थानजन्यवर्णनामानि
अ आ अ३ क ख ग घ ङ ह विसर्ग (:) क्ष	कण्ठ	कण्ठ्यः
इ ई इ३ च छ ज झ ञ य श	तालु	तालव्यः
ऋ ॠ ऋ३ ट ठ ड ढ ण र ष ळ	मूर्धा	मूर्धन्यः
लृ लृ लृ३ त थ द ध न ल स	दन्ताः	दन्त्यः
उ ऊ उ३ प फ ब भ म उपध्मानीयः (:प : फ) (actually the two smilies I've mentioned earlier)	ओष्ठौ	ओष्ठ्य
ङ ञ ण न म	नासिका कण्ठादिः	अनुनासिकः
ए ऐ	कण्ठतालु	कण्ठतालव्यः
ओ औ	कण्ठोष्ठम्	कण्ठोष्ठ्य
व	दन्तोष्ठम्	दन्तोष्ठ्य
जिह्वामूलीयः (: क :ख) (smilies again.)	जिह्वामूलम्	जिह्वामूलीयः
अनुस्वारः	नासिका	-

क्ष् is a वर्णः that has been given a position of equal standing in the वर्णमाला in the Vedas. Sanskrit grammar, whether modern or classical, visualizes it as क् + ष् and you will therefore find it in the dictionary in the क् section. However, we have retained all the वर्णाः that are in the original वर्णमाला ।

This has an important effect on pronunciations.

The विसर्ग carries forward the sound of the letter just before it.

वर्णः is pronounced वर्णह, वर्णाः is pronounced वर्णाहा, वर्णेः is pronounced वर्णेहि
गुरुः is pronounced गुरुहु and so on and so forth.

When the विसर्ग is followed by a क्, ख्, प्, or a फ्, the विसर्ग is forcefully expressed. Going by this, if the विसर्ग were to be followed by क्ष्, which, according to grammar a क् ष्, the विसर्ग should have been forcefully expressed. But it is not. In this case, the विसर्ग does what it is supposed to do....it carries forward the sound of the letter just before it.

C) Maheshwar Sutras.

माहेश्वर-सूत्राणि

महर्षिः पाणिनिः संस्कृतव्याकरणस्य प्रधानाचार्यः । पाणिनेः पूर्वमपि अनेके वैयाकरणाः आसन् । किन्तु तेषां ग्रन्थाः अद्यत्वे अज्ञाताः अलब्धाश्च । लभ्यमानेषु ग्रन्थेषु महामुनेः पाणिनेः ग्रन्थः प्राचीनतमः ।

पाणिनिः बाल्यकाले महामन्दबुद्धिः आसीत् इति मन्यन्ते । बालकः सः विद्यार्जनाय कमपि आचार्यम् उपागच्छत् । किन्तु अचिरं सः आचार्यगृहात् निष्कासितः अभवत् ।

तेन अपमानेन अतीव दुःखितः पाणिनिः अरण्यं गत्वा कठोरं तपस्याम् अकरोत् ।

तत्र अन्ये केचन सिद्धपुरुषाः भगवतः शङ्करस्य उपासनां कुर्वन्ति स्म । तेषां सर्वेषां तपस्यया सन्तुष्टः महादेवः आविर्भूय सर्वेभ्यः वरयाचनाय अकथयत् । प्रत्येकं तपस्वी स्वकीयं मनोरथं न्यवेदयत् । सर्वेषां मनोरथम् एकसार्थं पूरयितुं महेश्वरः चतुर्दशवारं डमरुम् अवादयत् ।

पाणिनिः चतुर्दशवारं डमरुनादं श्रुत्वा चतुर्दश सूत्राणि अरचयत् । प्रत्येकं नादः अ इ उ ण्

इत्यादि सूत्ररूपेण तस्य कर्णकुहरं प्रविष्टः। तानि सूत्राणि माहेश्वर-सूत्राणि वा कथ्यन्ते । एतानि सूत्राणि व्याकरणस्य आदिसूत्राणि मन्यन्ते ।

1. अ इ उ ण्
2. ऋ लृ क्
3. ए ओ ङ्
4. ऐ औ च्
5. ह य व र ट्
6. ल ण्
7. ज म ड ण न म्
8. झ भ ञ्
9. घ ढ ध ष्
10. ज ब ग ड द श्
11. ख फ छ ठ थ च ट त व्
12. क प य्
13. श ष स र्
14. ह ल् ।

Panini has based his entire grammatical work on these sutras. To avoid a detailed recital of the letters, he used what is called the प्रत्याहार . It is very much what you would see advertised in a shop window " A-Z available here." Rather than list what he has, the shopkeeper, in his A-Z, has conveyed the fact that he stores all that you need.

Similarly, when Panini wished to list only the स्वराः , he just said अच् and no more. Look at the sutras again. Which sutra has the अ ? The first. Which sutra ends in च् ? The fourth. Ignore every वर्ण with the हलन्त . They are called इत् वर्णाः and are only indicative letters which disappear the minute the purpose of indication has been fulfilled.

List all the letters that are in the four sutras and hey presto, you have a list of all the स्वराः !

Let's take another example. झश् would be all the वर्ण s in the 3rd and 4th column. Gottitt??

The peculiarity of the प्रत्याहार s is that they can start from any वर्ण । They may begin with a वर्ण coming from the middle of the group, but they must end with an इत् वर्णः।

Panini then worked on 41 such प्रत्याहार s in his अष्टाध्यायी. ण् comes twice as an इत् वर्णः। Whenever you have to choose the first, (1) will be written against the प्रत्याहार . Whenever you have to choose the second, (2) will be written against that प्रत्याहार. Shall we try work with प्रत्याहार s as a home assignment? Please refer to Lesson 62 A.

D) गुण, वृद्धि, दीर्घ, सम्प्रसारण changes.

You would have heard of सुन्दरम् and it's relative सौन्दर्यम् . It is apparent that the उ and औ are connected. What has happened here is a वृद्धि . It is often difficult to remember these terms.... गुण, वृद्धि, दीर्घ, सम्प्रसारण । So here is a list you can refer to when foxed by sandhis. The idea is to see the correlation amongst alphabets.

स्वर	अ	इ	उ	ऋ	लृ	ए	ऐ	ओ	औ
	आ	ई	ऊ	ऋ					
	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
दीर्घ	आ	ई	ऊ	ऋ	-	-	-	-	-
गुण	अ	ए	ओ	अर्	अल्	ए	-	ओ	-
वृद्धि	आ	ऐ	औ	आर्	आल्	ऐ	ऐ	औ	औ
यण् सन्धिः	-	य्	व्	र्	ल्				
अयादि सन्धिः	-	-	-	-	-	अय्	आय्	अव्	आव्
सम्प्रसारण		य→इ	व्→उ	र्→ऋ	ल्→लृ				
