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7

MAHESHWARA SUTRAS

Sounds of Sanskrit language are described in Maheshwara Sutras. There are basic of Sanskrit grammar. Maheshwara Sutras are fourteen in numbers. All the Vowels and Consonants are told in there Maheshwara Sutras.

OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson, you will be able to :

- recite all 14 Maheshwara Sutras;

- know Sanskrit Sounds; and

- identify the Pratyaharas.

7.1 MAHESHWARA SUTRAS

There is story behind the Samskrita alphabets. Nataraja is other name of Shiva. He is in the dancing pose. Nataraja has Damaru in his one hand. Damaru is a small two-headed drum, used in many Indian, Buddhist and Tibetan traditions. Damru is known as the instrument of Lord Shiva. Damaru was first created by

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Shiva to produce different sounds. Sanskrit Alphabets origined from the sound of the Damaru of the Lord Shiva called Maheswara Sutras.

Mãhesvara Sutrani is fourteen verses that organize the phonemes of Sanskrit as referred to in the Astadhyayi of Panini, the foundational text of Sanskrit grammar.

A famous verse in Sage Panini's Ashtadhyayi says that the Panini grammar that is in use now is graced by Lord Shiva. Hence the first known organized sounds are known as the Maheshvara Sutra - Maheshvara being another name of Lord Shiva. Here is the verse from Panini's Ashta-Dhyayi:

नृत्तावसाने नटराजराजो ननाद ढक्कां नवपञ्चवारम्।
उद्धर्त्तुकामो सनकादिसिद्धादिनेतद्विमर्शे शिवसूत्रजालम्।।

Meaning:

"At the end of his cosmic dance, Shiva, the Lord of dance, with a view to bless the sages Sanaka and so on, played on his Damaru fourteen times, from which emerged the following fourteen Sutras, popularly known as Shiva Sutras or Maheshvara Sutras"

Within the tradition they are known as the Aksarasamamnaya, "recitation of phonemes," but they are popularly known as the Siva Sutras because they are said to have been revealed to Panini by Shiva. They were either composed by Panini to accompany his Astadhyayi or predate him. The latter is less plausible, but

the practice of encoding complex rules in short, mnemonic verses are typical of the sutra style.

S.No	Sutras	
1	अ इ उ ण्।	a - i - u - n
2	ऋ लृ क्।	r - lr - k
3	ए ओ ङ्।	e - o - n
4	ऐ औ च्।	ai - au - c
5	ह य व र ट्।	ha - ya - va - ra - i
6	ल ण्।	lam - n
7	ञ म ङ. ण न म्।	ña - ma - na - na - na - m
8	झ भ ञ	jha - bha - ñ
9	घ ढ ध ष्।	gha - dha - dha - s
10	ज ब ग ड द श्।	ja - ba - ga - da - da - s
11	ख फ छ ठ थ च ट त व्।	kha - pha - cha - tha - tha - ca - ta - ta - v
12	क प य्।	ka - pa - y
13	श ष स र्।	sa - sa - sa - r
14	ह ल्।	ha - l

I. VARNA-MALA

These fourteen sutras contain all the letters of the sanskrit varnamala- the svaras (vowels) a, i, u, r, lr, e, ai, o, au and all the vyanjanas (consonants). You find half letters in the end of each Sutra for a reason. As per the Rig Veda, Lord Siva brought this Sanskrit alphabet sequence and the Sanskrit language to earth. The sounds of the alphabet originated from Lord Siva's 'damaru'.

The Sanskrit alphabet sequence is known as the 'Varna-mala'. The word 'varna' (वर्ण) means a 'syllable' and all the energies related to that syllable - color, presiding force, the mouth part used to pronounce each syllable, the related body part etc.

II. PRATYAHARA

Pratyahara is bringing together; bringing together of several letters (or words in a few cases, such as roots or nouns) by mentioning the first and the last only for the sake of brevity; the term प्रत्याहार is generally used in connection with brief terms such as अण्, अक्, अच्, हल् and the like, created by Panini in his grammar by taking any particular letter and associating it with any mute final letter (अनुबन्ध) of the fourteen Sivasutras, with a view to include all letters beginning with the letter uttered and ending with the letter which precedes the (mute) letter. The practice of using such abbreviations was in existence before Panini, possibly in the grammar attributed to Indra.

Economy (Sanskrit: laghava) is a major principle of their organization, and it is debated whether Panini deliberately encoded phonological patterns in them (as they were treated in traditional phonetic texts called Pratyhara) or simply grouped together phonemes which he needed to refer to in the Ashta dhyayi and which only secondarily reflect phonological patterns.

As an example, consider Ashtadhyayi 6.1.77: iKo yan aCi: (इको यणचि)

- iK means i, u, r, ir;

- iKo is iK in the genitive case, so it means ' in place of i, u, r, ir;

- yan means the semivowels y v r l and is in the nominative, so iKo yan means: y v r l replace i u r ir;

- aC means all vowels, as noted above

- aCi is in the locative case, so it means before any vowel.

Hence this rule replaces a vowel with its corresponding semivowel when followed by any vowel, and that is why dadhi together with atra makes dadhyatra. To apply this rule correctly we must be aware of the other rules of the grammar.
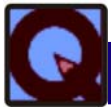
INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.1

1. Mahesvara Sutrani are………..verses that organize the phonemes of Sanskrit.

2. Ashtadhyaya was written by…………..

Notes

3. ……………… brought out the sequence of alphabets of Sanskrita.

4. The sanskrit alphabet sequence is known as the …………….

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT

Maheswara Sutra is the most ancient known Sanskrit alphabet sequence. Sanskrit Alphabets originates from Maheswara Sutras. There is fourteen verses that organize the phonemes of Sanskrit as referred to in the Ashtdhyayi of Panini, the foundational text of Sanskrit grammar.

The fourteen sutras contain all the letters of the Sanskrit varnamala- the svaras (Vowels) a, i, u, r, ir, e, ai, o, au and all the vyanjanas (Consonants).

TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Explain varna-mala?

2. Explain the term Pratyahara?

ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

7.1

1. Fourteen

2. Panini

3. Lord Shiva

4. Varna-mala