



ENCYCLOPEDIA OF YOGA



STEFANO PIANO

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MAGNANELLI

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GUIDE TO THE TRANSLITERATION AND PRONUNCIATION OF INDIAN TERMS

In this encyclopedia we have adopted the official system of transliteration of the *nāgarī* script which was established at the 10th Congress of Orientalists (1894) and is still used today by Indologists.

For a correct pronunciation of Sanskrit words we must first consider the accented syllables, which follow this rule: the accent falls on the second last syllable if the vowel is long by nature (an over-line on the vowel means that it is long, while the vowels *e*, *o* and the diphthongs *ai*, *au* are always long) or by position (when the vowel is followed by two or more consonants): e.g. *samsāra*, *astēya*, *ānānda*, etc. In other cases the accent falls on the third last syllable: *āmṛta*, *Upāniṣad*, *nīyama*, etc.

Pronunciation of vowels and diphthongs

a : as “u” in “rub”

ā : as “a” in “rather” (UK)

e : as “e” in “mental”

i : as “i” in “sit”

ī : as “ee” in “feel”

o : as “o” in “or”

u : as “u” in “put”

ū : as “u” in “crude”

ai : as “y” in “why”

au : as “ow” in “now”

Pronunciation of consonants

c : always a voiceless affricate even before the vowels *a/o/u* (e.g. *cit*, pronounced “chit”, and also *cakra*, “chakra”, etc.).

g : always a voiced guttural (as in *got*), even before the vowels *e* and *i* (e.g. *guru*, but also *Gītā* and *yogin* etc., where the *g* is pronounced as in “give”).

h : a voiced aspiration which is always pronounced and has the same value as other consonants. The aspiration must be pronounced even when the *h* follows immediately after an occlusive consonant (the aspirated occlusives are the voiceless/voiced couples *kha/gha*, *cha/jha*, *tha/dha*, *tha/dba* and *pha/bha*). Here the aspirate must be almost separated from the occlusive consonant itself (e.g. *dharma*, pronounced “d-hárma”, *dhauti*, pronounced “d-háuti” etc.).

j : a voiced affricate (as in “jet”).

m̄, *m̄* : indicates nasalisation.

ñ : the nasal velar of the “ng” in “anger”;

ṇ : a nasal retroflex (a sound between the palatal “n” of the British pronunciation of “news” and the dental “n” of “nose”).

ṅ : the “n” of the British pronunciation of “news”.

ṭ, *ṭh*, *ḍ*, *ḍh* : a series of retroflex occlusive consonants, which are essentially dentals pronounced like the “t” in “tree” or the “d” in “dream”.

ṛ : a vowel pronounced as an “r” followed by a very brief “i” (e.g. *Ṛg-veda*, pron. “Rigvéda”).

ś : always voiceless pronounced as “s” in “simple” or “asset” (in Sanskrit there is no equivalent of the voiced “s” between vowels, as in “design” etc.).

ṣ : the palato-alveolar fricative of “sh” in “show” (e.g. *Śiva*, pron. “Shíva”; *śabda*, pron. “shábdā”; *śūdra*, pron. “shúdra” etc.);

ṣ̣ : retroflex fricative, with a pronunciation very similar to “ś” (e.g. *dveṣa*, pron. “dvésha”).

The same rules apply for the pronunciation of Pāli and Hindī words. Tamil words, however, contain the special signs *ḷ*, *ḻ* and *ḽ* which indicate alveolar consonants, pronounced like the corresponding consonants in English, with the exception of *ḻ*, which is pronounced like the American *r*.

PREFACE

With this encyclopedia the publisher and the curator intend to fill a gap in the field of indological studies that exists not only in Italy, but also in Europe, and at the same time to try to adopt a clear and scientifically correct method to explain an area of knowledge that for too long has been neglected by academia and has been the preserve of enthusiasts whose undoubted passion was not always matched by an adequate academic training. The fact remains, however, that of the whole cultural heritage of India spanning thousands of years, Yoga is the element that is best known to large swathes of the general public in Europe, since its psycho-physical techniques, especially the physical disciplines, have become widely taught and practised and have proved to be effective in enabling people today to cope with the stress of modern living.

Compiling this encyclopedia has been a hugely demanding task, due mainly to the fact that, philologically, we have had to base our work on a series of sources and a range of lexical terms that do not belong to the “classical” age of Indian culture, but rather to the medieval period when the language, like the religious tradition, was undergoing a process of renewal that was often difficult. We know that the entire lexicon of Tantrism is far from being precisely defined, due to the numerous variants that are present in a tradition passed on through handwritten manuscripts that are not at all consistent with each other, as regards both grammatical structures and the choices of spelling, which reflected phonetic realities of the time that have since then radically changed and are still undergoing transformation.

Therefore, our decision has been to adopt some general standards, which we have outlined below:

1) From the philological point of view, the specific lexis used is based on classical Sanskrit: therefore, in absence of any specific reference to the contrary, all non-English terms are understood as belonging to the vocabulary of Sanskrit, while any etymological definitions also refer to Sanskrit.

2) In the case of discrepancies between texts, the “classical” form has been adopted, standardising the Sanskrit script when it has been passed down in different forms in the tantric texts. For example, you will find maṇḍūka-āsana and not maṇḍuka-āsana, even though the latter form appears in the Gheraṇḍa-saṃhitā. For the transliteration of the Sanskrit terms in nāgarī script to Roman letters, the standard international system has been used.

3) Naturally, in the case of anomalous compound words in tantric Sanskrit we have preserved the original version, as for example, mātaṅginī-mudrā, where the first element agrees with the second (mudrā is feminine), but have, however, provided a correct translation: here “gesture of the elephant”, and not “gesture of the female elephant”, which would, in any case, have been written as mātaṅgī and not mātaṅginī. In order to avoid unnecessary confusion, we have sometimes maintained translations that are already commonly used, as in the case of aśvinī-mudrā, rendered as “gesture of the mare”, despite our conviction that this compound word would be more appropriately translated as “gesture of the horseman”.

4) As regards the translation of the Sanskrit terms, especially those of a philosophical nature, we have tried to find a compromise between the demands of scientific precision and

the need for these terms to be accessible to non-experts, our aim being always to avoid adding to the confusion already rife in this area, but rather to bring some measure of clarity. This approach is all the more justified by the fact that for many concepts no one interpretation can be considered definite and differing points of view are held by scholars and academics. In other words, in the case of concepts that are particularly difficult to grasp and subject to contrasting interpretations, from the possible solutions we have adopted the one that appeared the most comprehensible for a well informed lay person. We have, of course, endeavored to give editorial uniformity to the whole encyclopedia (within the limits of possibility): the contributors are not, therefore, to be held responsible for any simplifications, which are attributable only and exclusively to the curator.

In curating the material prepared by the contributors, we have made some adjustments, which include original quotations from the sources, as well as some additions relating to the particular meaning that a word may assume for a specific doctrinal area (tantra or yoga). However, the substance of each entry has always been respected and, except in a very few cases, the initials of the name and surname of the author appear at the end of the piece contributed.

With regard to names of people and places, we have in some cases chosen to use the westernized form based on the English transcription, especially in the case of well-known places, or eminent figures who adopted by choice a certain transcription of their name in Roman script to be used in their contacts with the West. The writers are perfectly aware of the correct Indian form of the name, but prefer to avoid confusion for those less expert. Therefore, the reader will find Aurobindo, not Aravinda; Ramakrishna, not Rāmakṛṣṇa; Delhi, not Dillī. However, we have decided to write Himālayas, showing that the vowel ā must be stressed, in order to correct the standard westernized pronunciation which is inaccurate (for the same reason Vivekānanda is spelt with long “a”, important for the correct pronunciation).

As far as the technical terminology and content is concerned, the indological terms have been edited by the curator with the collaboration of a closely affiliated group of experts in Indology from Italy, principally from Turin, while the remaining terminology, mostly relevant to practice, has been prepared partly by the editor and partly by experienced Yoga teachers. As regards the techniques described, they are based on those found in the most authoritative sources (Haṭhayoga-pradīpikā, Gheraṇḍa-saṃhitā, Śiva-saṃhitā, etc.), and, taking into account divergences and differences between them, we have included all the practices that could be considered variations on each of the fundamental techniques.

Within the text of each entry, an initial letter followed by a full stop stands for the head word itself, unless it is part of a compound word, in which case the head word is written in full.

It is our hope that the considerable time and effort which, in a spirit of service, we have committed to this book, will render it useful not only to students of Indology but also to the wide group of enthusiasts, whose encounter with Yoga has enabled them to acquire physical and spiritual well-being.

S. P.