

Sriranga Sadgurave Namaha

SAMSKRUTAM (SANSKRIT) - AN ALL ENCOMPASSING LANGUAGE

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In describing various ornaments for a person, a verse in Sanskrit says that the best ornament is the speech of the person which bears culture.

Vaneyka Samalamkaroti Purusham Ya Samskruta Dharyate

Incidentally, the meaning of the word Samskruta in Sanskrit language also means 'cultured' or 'well done'.

It is well known that Sanskrit is one of oldest languages and is at the root of many Indo-Germanic languages. However, there is a general opinion that Sanskrit is so called 'dead' language as it being not used as a day to day spoken language. In reality, Sanskrit is at the root of most of the languages of India and some European languages. Also, it is well known that the cultural, scientific, technological and philosophical literature given by Rishis of ancient India are in Sanskrit. The all-encompassing nature of Sanskrit language indicates that the language is formulated as a system which can be applied to any subject matter. In recent times, the use of Sanskrit as natural language in the area of artificial intelligence for knowledge representation is under study. Some of the characteristic features of this great language are briefly presented below.

The grammar of Sanskrit is well structured and is presented by Sri Panini Maharishi in his treatise 'Ashtadhyayi'. The grammar is presented in the form of 'sutras' (like a rule, a formula etc.) There are about 4000 sutras placed in a systematic order. A large number of words (including proper nouns) in Sanskrit are derivable from 'Dhatus'. A 'Dhatu' is essentially a 'root' which indicates an action. For example, root 'vid' means 'to know'. The word 'Vidwan (scholar)' is derived from root 'vid'. There are about 1900 different roots from which majority of the words are derived. Also, with the use of 22 'upasargas' (prefixes) words and meanings are modified. There are many examples in which derived words carry the sound quality of the root. The root 'vid' gives rise to many words such as 'veda', 'vidwan', 'vidya', 'vaidika', 'vidwat', etc. The meaning of a sentence in Sanskrit does not depend on the placement of the constituent words. This is mainly because of the declension of the words into various cases. In Sanskrit many single letters would carry meaning (for ex: 'ja' would mean 'born') in the context of the development of words. Also, many words have a common meaning as well as a meaning in vedic (philosophy) context for ex: the word 'purusha' commonly means 'man', but in vedic context, it would mean 'Soul'. It is easier to memorize texts (poetry or prose) in Sanskrit possibly because of the rhythmic structure which is helpful in effective oral communication (Shruti). The process of 'roots' evolving into 'words' facilitates formulation of new words making the vocabulary expandable.

Some features of Sanskrit noted above are only an indication of the brevity of packing information such that the language in a compressed form in the basics can be adapted to communication of knowledge in various aspects of Life, such as arts, music, dance, science, philosophy, medicine, literature, religion technology etc. Thus it can be said that the spirit of Sanskrit is still vibrant as seen in the art and religion, with its direct use is not being made in the day to day communication and activities. However, it can be said that even a cursory knowledge of Sanskrit can only help a person in obtaining a feeling of its greatness as a language and profundity of the thoughts communicated through it.