



लृ and लृ in Sanskrit Lexicography

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Lazarus Project (Cologne Sanskrit Lexicon) Project Documentation 1



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Lazarus Project (Cologne Sanskrit Lexicon)
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1 लृ and लृ

This report documents the graphematic representation of the vocalic L (Devanagari: लृ/ ISO 15919: 𑂔) and the combination of consonantal L with vocalic R (Devanagari: लृ/ ISO 15919: 𑂔) in Sanskrit lexicography.

Vocalic L is represented by a simple vowel letter लृ in Devanagari, while the combination of consonantal L with vocalic R is represented by the akṣara लृ. Although these two are clearly distinct entities, they were conflated in the original digitisation of the Cologne Sanskrit Lexicon (CSL).¹ However, a closer look shows that problems of inconsistent treatment of लृ and लृ have a long and distinguished tradition in the writing systems used of modern Sanskrit lexicography. The relevant writing systems in this context are Devanagari and Latin script. Of the various Latin-based transliteration systems, four are considered in this report: The ISO standard ISO 15919:2001, the transliteration used in Monier-Williams (1872, 1899), the Sanskrit Library Phonetic Basic encoding scheme (SLP1), and the popular Harvard-Kyoto transliteration system.

1.1 The vowel लृ

Vocalic L लृ belongs to a group of linguistically controversial graphemes (and ultimately phonemes) of Sanskrit. This controversial group of graphemes in Sanskrit scripts consists of the long vocalic R 𑂔, the vocalic L लृ, and in particular the long vocalic L लृ. Indologists have treated these graphemes with suspicion. Böhtlingk and Roth avoided 𑂔, 𑂔, and लृ in verbal forms by replacing them with their guṇa forms *ar*, *ār*, and *al* in the entries of the *Großes Petersburger Wörterbuch* (Böhtlingk and Roth, 1855-1875). Monier-Williams (1872) groups these three graphemes in one section “𑂔 लृ 𑂔” and prefixes this section with the following paragraph:

No Sanskrit word begins with any of these vowels; 𑂔 [𑂔] appears only in the Gen[itive] plur[al] of nouns terminating in 𑂔 [𑂔], in the the acc[usative] plur[al] of fem[inine] nouns of relationship, and in the nom[inative] and acc[usative] plur[al] of neuter nouns in 𑂔. As to the vowel लृ [लृ] it occurs only in some forms of the root कृप् [कृप्]. The long लृ [लृ] is a mere invention of grammarians.

As Monier-Williams (1899) states, vocalic L लृ is rare in Sanskrit words and and nearly exclusively occurs in forms of the root कृप् [कृप्] ‘to be well ordered’. Other occurrences are doubtful or artificial. The only possible occurrence is in the root कृब् [कृब्] ‘accomplishment’ which is suspiciously close to कृप् [कृप्]. Several dictionaries list the proper name लृतक [लृतक] -taka. However, this form is generally considered to be a mispronunciation of 𑂔तक [𑂔तक] -taka by these lexicographers. The lemma लृ [लृ] ‘the earth, the mother of the gods’ is secondary lemma from tantric texts derived from the vowel लृ. Other entries containing लृ [लृ] concern the letter and sound लृ [लृ] itself and derivations of it: लृकार [लृकार] and लृवर्ण [लृवर्ण] both meaning ‘the sound लृ [लृ]’.

1.2 The akṣara लृ

The akṣara लृ – the combination of the consonant ल with the vowel 𑂔 – is even less common. The only well-attested entries that contain लृ are not for lexemes in the strict

¹<http://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/>

sense, but for technical terms derived from inflectional affixes. Monier-Williams (1872) gives the following definitions:

लृङ् लृन् ‘a technical term or symbol for the terminations of the Conditional or for that Mood itself.’

लृट् लृत् ‘a technical term or symbol for the terminations of the Second Future or for that Tense itself.’

The various dictionaries differ slightly in their treatment of these technical terms from Pāṇini. The dictionnaire sanscrit-français (Stchoupak et al., 1932) has both लृङ् लृन् and लृट् लृत् in romanisation and Apte’s Sanskrit English Dictionary (Apte, 1890) lists लृङ् लृन् and लृट् लृत् in Devanagari. Cappeler (1887, 1891) and Macdonnell (1893) only have an entry for लृट् लृत्. In contrast to Monier-Williams (1872), Monier-Williams (1899) has an entry for लृट् लृत्, but instead of लृङ् लृन्, the Monier-Williams (1899) edition gives लृ लृ ‘N[ame]. of the terminations of the Conditional Mood or N[ame] of that Mood itself’ as an entry, although he lists लृङ् लृन् and लृट् लृत् – not लृ लृ – under the entry ल la.

Apte in his Sanskrit English Dictionary (1890) is particularly inconsistent in his treatment of लृ and लृ लृ. Under the entry लृ, he states that “No Sanskrit word begins with लृ or लृ, except some of the technical names of Pāṇini for tenses and moods; e. g. लृन् [लृन्] and लृत् [लृत्].” However, लृङ् लृन् and लृट् लृत् are clearly instances of लृ लृ with a consonantal onset and Apte (1890) himself lists them correctly under the consonant ल l in the same dictionary.

The only proper lexeme reported to contain the combination लृ लृ is absent from all major lexicographic works such as the Große Petersburger Wörterbuch (Böhtlingk and Roth, 1855-1875) and Monier-Williams (1872, 1899). However, Wilson (1832), Yates (1846), and the Vidyāsāgara (1900) contain an entry for a root लृञ्च लृञ्च with the meaning ‘to put away’. All three dictionaries give the additional form लृञ्चति लृञ्चति. Neither of these dictionaries give references to occurrences and it is unclear where and in which particular form or forms this lexeme is attested. In particular, whether the lexeme is attested in its base form लृञ्च लृञ्च or a guṇa form (presumably लृञ्च लृञ्च) would be relevant. The three entries read as follows:

लृञ्च r. 1st cl. (लृञ्चति) To put away. (Wilson, 1832, p. 722)

लृञ्च लृञ्चति 1. a. To put away. (Yates, 1846, p. 646)

लृञ्च r. 1st cl. (लृञ्चति) To put away. (Vidyāsāgara, 1900, p. 619)

Vidyāsāgara (1900) is based on Wilson (1832). So the fact that it occurs in both works with an identical entry is no surprise. Whether Yates has also taken this lemma from Wilson or whether he did verify it independently is unknown. The lack of entries for this lexeme in later works and especially in Böhtlingk and Roth (1855-1875) and Monier-Williams (1899) is suspicious and suggests that it only occurs in late varieties of Sanskrit, if it is genuine at all.

2 Conflating लृ and लृ लृ

2.1 Conflating लृ and लृ लृ in Devanagari

The confusion or conflation of लृ and लृ लृ occurs throughout Sanskrit lexicography and probably beyond that throughout the whole philological tradition. The two glyphs लृ and

ल are very similar in shape in Devanagari script, with ल looking very much like a frozen combination of ल l and ृ, the diacritical form of र. Some cuts of Devanagari typefaces seem to make no distinction in shape between लृ and ल or at least the distinction was blurred in the usage of these typefaces. Apte's discussion of लृ and लृ under ल (see above) is a clear instance of this confusion.

The similarity in shape between ल and लृ is particularly striking in Devanagari. Other Brahmi-derived scripts display far less or virtually no likeness between the two graphemes as the Table 1 shows.

	ल	लृ
Devanagari	ल	लृ
Bengali	ল	লৃ
Oriya	ଌ	ଌୠ
Telugu	ల	లృ

Table 1: ल and लृ in different Indic scripts

2.2 Conflating ल and लृ in Latin script

The ISO standard 15919:2001 clearly distinguishes between the two and transliterates ल as ल and लृ as लृ (ल for ल and रृ for र). The romanisation used in Monier-Williams (1872, 1899) conflates the two. The combination लृ is transliterated as लृ – as a combination of ल for ल and रृ for र. The vowel ल is represented by the complex sequence लृ, unfortunately identical to the juxtaposition of ल and रृ. The *Sanskrit Library Phonetic Basic encoding scheme* (SLP1) as defined in Scharf and Hyman (2011) treats Sanskrit Sounds – and by that Devanagari characters – very consistently. The combination लृ is encoded as लf – as a combination of ल for ल and f for र – while the simple vowel ल is encoded by the simplex x. The very popular romanisation system Harvard-Kyoto conflates लृ and ल. In the Harvard-Kyoto system, लृ is transliterated as लR – as a combination of ल for ल and R for र. The vowel ल is represented by the combined लR, unfortunately again identical to the juxtaposition of ल and R. All four transliteration systems are given in Table 2.

	ल	लृ
ISO	ल	लृ
MW	लृ	लृ
SLP1	x	लf
HK	लR	लR

Table 2: ल and लृ in different transliterations

3 Conclusion

The vocalic L ऌ and akṣara or grapheme combination ऌ are marginal to the Sanskrit language and entries containing the two graphemes are of questionable status. However, both ऌ and ऌ are part of Sanskrit or at least of traditional and modern analysis and representation of the Sanskrit language. Lexicographic works that aim at representing the complete lexical knowledge concerning the Sanskrit language have to distinguish the two consistently to be faithful to this tradition.

For Sanskrit lexicography this means that systems used to represent Sanskrit have to encode the difference between the ऌ and ऌ unambiguously. While Indic writing systems such as Devanagari fulfill this requirement, some Latin-based systems fail in this regard. In particular the transliteration employed in the most widely used Sanskrit-English dictionary (Monier-Williams, 1899) conflates ऌ and ऌ, as does the most popular Latin-based transliteration, Harvard-Kyoto. SLP 1 (Scharf and Hyman, 2011) and ISO 15919 accomplish an unequivocal transliteration of Sanskrit and are much better suited for lexicographical work.

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