the second stage of alphabetic progress. It was, in fact, essentially syllabic, and even to this day the Semitic alphabets coming immediately from it—viz. the Hebrew, Syriac, and Arabic—are very little better than syllabic systems. Such an alphabet then, though well suited to Eastern calligraphic tastes, was manifestly imperfect. It provided chiefly for consonants, as if they were the lords of sound, instead of its dependents, and often its impediments. The real want for civilized nations, eager for intercommunication, was a phonetic alphabet, by which neither ideas nor consonants, but rather *sounds* should be symbolized. As therefore vowels are the only real representatives of sound, and indeed the very life of the word which without them would be a mere hard and helpless skeleton, it was essential to an effective phonetic system of graphic symbols that vowels should have at least as prominent a position in a written word as their attendant consonants. This was very soon felt by the Greeks, who no sooner received a consonantal alphabet from Phœnicia than they began to remedy its defects, and forthwith invented a system by which the vowel sounds were properly symbolized and distributed side by side with their consonantal fellows —not as mere appendages, but as close companions. The Greek expansion of the Phœnician alphabet was still further developed by the more practical Romans, and by them spread everywhere throughout Europe*.

Now, although the Semitic origin of Indian alphabets has not yet been satisfactorily proved, it is still probable that the Eastern branch of the Āryan stock which settled down in India, derived their first idea of symbolizing language by written marks indirectly from Phœnicia through some neighbouring country whose system was borrowed from Semitic models†. They appear also, like the Greeks, to have felt the defects of a syllabic or merely consonantal method, and just as they worked out for themselves their own theory of grammar, so they elaborated for themselves their own 'vowelized' system of writing. Note, however, how the subtle-minded Hindūs, working out their own ideas in their own philosophical way, have produced an alphabet, not only free from the defects of the Semitic, but so overdone in its abundance of vowel symbols and its theory of the mutual relationship of vowels and consonants, that this very elaboration becomes practically a serious hindrance.

Let me for the benefit of those who may use this Dictionary for philological purposes, without having acquired a complete familiarity with the Nāgarī letters, briefly point out the most conspicuous merits and demerits of the European and Indian systems.

From what I have before advanced, it will, I think, be clear that it ought to be a fixed rule in all good alphabets, 1st, That every vowel, short and long, should be properly symbolized and admitted to close companionship with its consonant, no vowel symbol being ever allowed to stand for any other vowel sound but its own. For example, the 'a' sound of 'ka' should be properly symbolized; it should not be supposed to inhere in 'k;' nor should it be represented by a mere dot or stroke, above or below the 'k,' as if it were a simple appendage to the consonant, as in Semitic alphabets. Nor should the symbol 'a' be allowed to stand for different vowel sounds short and long, as in 'tape,' 'tap,' 'tall,' 'tar,' 'mortar,' in every one of which the vowel ought to be variously symbolized. 2ndly, That every simple consonant should have one single fixed symbol, and never more than one. For example, the symbol 'k' should not be interchangeable with 'c' to express the same consonantal power as in 'cap' and 'keep.' 3rdly, That modifications of any particular simple

* The Romans, however, having no proper aspirated consonantal sounds, rejected the Greek θ, φ, χ, and to represent these unhappily originated the clumsy *th*, *ph*, *ch*, writing also *ps* for ψ.

† According to Mr. Edward Thomas (Prinsep's Indian Antiquities, vol. ii. p. 42), the theory by which Professor Weber has sought to establish a Phœnician origin for the Indian alphabets is untenable. There are, however, two sets of Buddhist inscriptions, and that of Kapurdigiri is decidedly traceable to a Phœnician source. Those on the rock of Girnar (Giri-nagara) in Kattywar, Gujarāt, which are said to be most important in their relation to the present Indian alphabets, are not so clearly traceable. Mr. Thomas appears to have good ground for thinking that many of the Nāgarī letters were derived from the Drāviḍians of the South.