

## SAMSKR̥T—LIVING OR DEAD?

**T**HE pilots to whom is entrusted the steering to safe harbor of the educational ship of India are many of them laboring under the notion that Samskr̥t is a dead language, like Greek or Latin. This notion arises from an imperfect knowledge of the data on which the comparison is instituted between Samskr̥t and (say) Greek. The true data are to be gathered from such main considerations as:

(i.) Where a language is more of the State than of the Church, it fails to be invested with that sacrosanct nimbus which makes for permanence.

(ii.) Where a language is concerned mostly with the secular affairs of a State, its life is necessarily conterminous with the life of that State. When the Grecian State ceased to exist, for example, the death-knell of Greek was tolled.

(iii.) Where a language is merely the ventilation of the philosophical views of a nation, its life is limited, inasmuch as it leaves the realms of a nation's heart untouched.

Applying these data to India, we find (i.) that from the very beginning Samskr̥t has been primarily of the Church and the use of it for purposes of State possessed no more than a consequential value; (ii.) that as the spirit of Samskr̥t is bound up with the interests of Spirit not with those of matter, its life is bound up with affairs more of the transmundane than with those of the sublunary; (iii.) that as Samskr̥t is more the exponent of the heart of the Indian nation (Hindūs) than of the intellect merely, its life is assured as long as this heart of the nation shall not cease to beat.

Briefly Samskr̥t is chiefly the interpretation of the religious sentiments of the Hindūs, and inasmuch as the

nation of the Hindūs and the religion of the Hindūs, though they began before Assyria and Babylonia, before Greece and Rome, have survived, despite the tremendous cataclysms to which they have been subjected, whereas Assyria and others have ceased to be, their language, the Samskrṭ, lives with them. To call it dead, therefore, when the nation lives and its religion lives, is singularly anomalous.

With this anomaly is found in these days the paradox that those educational pilots who like to think Samskrṭ dead—and therefore not worth devoting attention to as an element imperatively necessary to make any scheme of Indian education really complete and successful for the nation's welfare both here and hereafter—still deem it necessary to import Samskrṭ scholars from the West to teach the East (India) Samskrṭ!<sup>1</sup> This paradox is twofold: that while Samskrṭ is considered dead in the East, it is seen to be living and cultivated in the West, and that instead of leaving what is dead to the past to "bury its dead," it is considered necessary to make it live by infusing life imported from western lands.

So long therefore as modern educationists have come to think that the time has arrived to impart to Indians moral and religious education, it is not sane and sober on their parts to entertain the notion that Samskrṭ is dead, for it must be realised how intimately it is interlaced with the ethics and religion of the country.

That Samskrṭ is not to be considered dead—apart from considerations as to its great value for the moral, religious and philosophical moulding which it possesses for the students—may be believed from what the immortal Max Müller says in his good book, *India, what can it teach us?*

I do believe that not to know what a study of Samskrṭ, and particularly a study of the Veda has already done for illuminating the darkest passages in the history of the human mind, of that mind on which we ourselves are feeding and living, is a misfortune, or, at all events, a loss, just as

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<sup>1</sup> This is with reference to a proposal to bring in a German Samskrṭ Professor to teach Hindūs in an Indian State.

I should count it a loss to have passed through life without knowing something, however little, of the earth and its geological formation, of the movements of the sun, the moon, and the stars, and of the thought, or the will, or the law, that governs these movements. [P. 255.]

And yet, in the face of the utterances of such veterans, our Universities are blind to the value of promoting the study of Samskr̥t language and literature, and do not take it under their protecting ægis. But perhaps they may say that these utterances are old, and times have changed, a new policy has dawned on India, contingent on the unrest. But we say that these very changes require the more energetic pursuit of the country's moral and religious and philosophical stores of knowledge enshrined in Samskr̥t to still the unrest. And if the utterance above indited is old, let us hear a most modern advocate, Mrs. Annie Besant, for she pleads thus :

There is just another point I wish to put to you about Samskr̥t. The greatest treasures of Samskr̥t learning are going to England for translation, to be translated by Englishmen, by Orientalists, who take an interest in these works, but who have no belief in their deeper meanings, who do not share in the religious faith which inspired them, who do not share the philosophic views which they embody, who have no sympathy with the national traditions, and therefore who will never give the spirit of the originals, however accurately, however grammatically, they may translate them. I myself, with my limited experience, know of more than one priceless untranslated work which has been taken over to England to pass into the hands of English Orientalists for translation. Why? Because no one could be found here to do it. One work has been thus taken over lately to England to be translated and issued at a cost of £ 800, and this after a fruitless search of many months for a translator here. I ask you whether it would not be better that members of the Hindū religion should translate these Hindū religious books themselves; whether you think it creditable that they should be sent to the West for translation by men who do not share your beliefs and have no sympathy whatsoever with your religion? Is it likely that translations of this kind can be true to the spirit of the originals? Is it likely that the delicate points, the shades of thought, will ever be truly caught? Is it likely that with the aid of a grammar and dictionary, a mere comparison of book with book, the meanings of deep religious books will be faithfully rendered, that there will be understanding of the subtle distinctions in belief, only to be found in the hearts of men who are at one with the religion itself, and are contained in the true meaning

of these books? Therefore you want to build up a class in India, educated in Samskr̥t and also in English, who will be able not only to give the *spirit* of the original Samskr̥t . . . but will be able to give the most accurate equivalents of the terms, and not simply give the dictionary English meanings which now disfigure the translation. [*The Means of India's Regeneration.*]

As long as the Hindū nation is not dead, Samskr̥t cannot be dead. All those who will help its revival will be the friends of not only India but of the whole humanity to whom the wealth of its literature must be freely given now. It is especially incumbent on the Indian Princes to do this work.

A. GOVINPĀCHĀRYA

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THE SILENCE

Something that checks the hasty word,  
 And ill-considered deed—  
 A silent voice within our soul,  
 Which we do well to heed;  
 Something that speaks not through the brain,  
 But in our hearts alone—  
 A hush, which falling seems to say—  
 "My child—let time atone."

'Let time atone'—of every wrong  
 The only sovereign cure—  
 We feel this true, and gathering strength  
 Know we can still endure:  
 Not passively, nor futilely,  
 Accepting what is wrong—  
 But through the fiercest of our strife  
 Sustained by peace more strong.