

A Technique for Writing Wambule

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This article presents a simple and consistent technique for rendering the basic units of the Wambule sound system in the Devanāgarī script and a non-Indological Roman script that uses font symbols which are readily available on any ordinary typewriter or computer.

Phonemes and graphemes

The Wambule phonemes and their proposed orthographic Devanāgarī and non-Indological Roman counterparts are listed here.

/ʌ/ अ ँ					
/a/ आ a		/a:/ अऽ aa			
/i/ इ i		/i:/ इऽ ii			
/u/ उ u		/u:/ उऽ uu			
/e/ ए e		/ɛ:/ ऐ ăi			
/o/ ओ o		/ɔ:/ औ ău			
/k/ क k	/kh/ ख kh	/g/ ग g	/gh/ घ gh	/ŋ/ ङ ng	/ʔ/ अ् q
/c/ च c	/ch/ छ ch	/j/ ज j	/jh/ झ jh		
/t/ ट tz	/th/ ठ tzh	/d/ ड dz	/dʰ/ ढ dzh		
/t/ त t	/th/ थ th	/d/ द d	/dʰ/ ध dh	/n/ न n	/d/ ड् dq
/p/ प p	/ph/ फ ph	/b/ ब b	/bh/ भ bh	/m/ म m	/b/ ब् bq

In contrast to the consonants, which are represented by one symbol each, all but one (i.e. अ) of the vowels in the Devanāgarī script have two symbols each. The vowel characters, which are given above, are used in initial positions and after other vowels. By contrast, the vowel ligatures अ, इ, उ, ए, ऐ, ओ, औ, ए, ऐ, ओ, औ, ए, ऐ, ओ, औ are used after consonants.

Phonological analysis

An essential step in studying a language is the establishment of its sound system. My phonological analysis of Wambule is based on a classical phonemic approach, in which the qualification of the minimal units of the sound system is given in terms of their distribution and identity. Sounds are considered phonemic if substitution of one sound for another causes a change in meaning. If substitution does not cause a change a meaning or if two sounds do not occur in the same environments, they can be considered allophonic realisations of the same phoneme. Neutralisation is the loss of contrast between phonemes in a particular environment. Capital letters are used to indicate archiphonemes in phonemic transcription.

In Wambule, vowel length is distinctive in the initial open syllable of polysyllabic words except negated verb forms. Vowel length is generally lost or neutralised in the remaining phonological environments. I advise to use single vowel symbols for neutralised vowels or archiphonemes. Following Avināth Rāī's convention introduced in his *Vāmbule Rāī Śabdakoś* (VS 2054), phonemic vowel length can be uniformly indicated by means of the symbol S in Devanāgarī. I propose not to use the symbols ई and ऊ to indicate the long vowel phonemes /i:/ and /u:/. In Roman Wambule, phonemic vowel length can be indicated by means of vowel doubling.

/bico/	बिचो	<i>bqico</i>	'wife'
/bi:co/	बिऽचो	<i>bqiico</i>	'woman'
/caco/	चाचो	<i>caco</i>	'grandson'
/ca:co/	चाऽचो	<i>caaco</i>	'the one climbing'
/lucAm/	लुचाम	<i>lucam</i>	'to cause a sensation'
/lu:cAm/	लुऽचाम	<i>luucam</i>	'to be poured out'

The difference between long vowels and sequences that consist of two identical adjacent vowels can be indicated by means of the diacritic symbol (").

/gu:m/	गुऽम	<i>guum</i>	'I will pick it up'
/guUm/	गुउम	<i>guüm</i>	'he will pick it up'

The contrast between /ya/ and /e/ and between /wa/ and /o/ is phonologically relevant in initial stressed syllables:

/syacAm/	स्याचाम	<i>syacam</i>	'to pluck'
/secAm/	सेचाम	<i>secam</i>	'to be swept'
/swacAm/	स्वाचाम	<i>swacam</i>	'to say, talk'
/socAm/	सोचाम	<i>socam</i>	'to tell'

The contrast between postconsonantal /ya/ and /e/ and between /wa/ and /o/ is only marginally distinctive in other syllable types. The distinction between /wa/ and /o/ actually seems to be subject to neutralisation or free variation in word-final positions and before suffix-es such as <-me>, which creates nominal constituents.

/waTce/	वाच्चे	<i>wacce</i>	'needle'
/waTcyAm/	वाच्च्याम	<i>waccyam</i>	'needle'
/alo/	आलो	<i>alo</i>	'here'
/alwAm/	आल्वाम	<i>alwam</i>	'that of here'

Retroflex sounds are not the mainstay of Wambule phonology. In native words, retroflex sounds are generally used instead of alveolar sounds depending on personal style or preference. Retroflex sounds can be indicated in Roman Wambule by means of the symbol *z* following the symbol for a plain alveolar sound, viz. *tz*, *tzh*, *dz* and *dzh*.

/nʌʈhʌŋ/	नौठाड	<i>nʌutzhang</i>	'back; after'
/byaʈhwʌŋ/	ब्याट्वाड	<i>byatzhwang</i>	'knife'
/kuɖU/	कुडु	<i>kudzu</i>	'house'

The symbol *q* can be used after *b* and *d* to indicate implosive stops, and also between two vowels to indicate a glottal stop. The symbol अ् can be used in Devanāgarī script.

/bambU/	ब्आम्बु	<i>bqambu</i>	'cheek'
/doblr/	ड्ओबिर	<i>dqobir</i>	'head strap'
/yoʔUm/	योअुम	<i>yoqum</i>	'I threw overhand'
/ywaʔUm/	य्वाअुम	<i>ywaqum</i>	'I turned round'

In conclusion, when writing Wambule in e.g. e-mails, vowel doubling and symbols such as *â*, *q*, *z*, " , which are commonly available in Roman fonts, can be used to clearly distinguish short vowels from long vowels, alveolar consonants from retroflex consonants and glottal phonemes from non-glottal phonemes. The symbols *S* and अ् can be used to indicate vowel length and glottal consonants in Devanāgarī script.

Bibliographic references

Rāi, Avināth. VS 2057. *Vāmbule Rāi Śabdakoś*. Lalitpur: Vāmbule Samāj Nepāl.