

TEN THOUSAND  
SANSKRIT NAMES

# SUNĀMA-SARIT

सुनाम-सरित्

NITYĀNANDA MIŚRA





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# **Sunāma-Sarit**

## Ten Thousand Sanskrit Names

Nityānanda Miśra



**CHAUKHAMBHA CLASSICA**  
Vārāṇasī, Bhārata

**Sunāma-Sarit: Ten Thousand Sanskrit Names**

ISBN: 978-93-91730-10-9

Pages: 08 + 504

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Publisher

**Chaukhambha Classica**

K 37/109, Gopal Mandir Lane, Varanasi 221001 (India)

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First edition: Vikrama 2080 (2023 CE)

Typeset in Lua<sup>TEX</sup>by Nityānanda Miśra

₹ 895 / =

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

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**Chaukhambha Bharati Academy**

K 37/109, Gopal Mandir Lane, Varanasi 221001 (India)

**Chaukhambha Vishvabharati**

K 37/109, Gopal Mandir Lane, Varanasi 221001 (India)

**Chaukhambha Books**

5, Block UA, Jawahar Nagar, Malkaganj, Delhi 110007 (India)

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Printed by: Moksh Print Pack, Mumbai

To Didi and Jijaji



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# Introduction

A saying in Sanskrit goes, “The wisdom of the father (or the parents) is known from the reason behind giving a name [to a child]” (*jñāyate pitṛ-pāṇḍityaṃ nāma-dhāraṇa-kāraṇāt*). The paramount importance given to names in the history of Bhārata needs no introduction. The universe of Sanskrit names is also unparalleled in the world. Owing to the numerous verbal derivatives (*kṛdantas*) from nearly 2,000 roots, the secondary derivatives (*taddhitāntas*) from these words, and the immense productivity of compounding with seven types and 55 sub-types of compounds (*samāsas*), the number of names in Sanskrit is quite likely to be the highest among all world languages. It should not come as a surprise then that Sanskrit literature has hundreds of Sahasranāmans, collections of one thousand names of a deity, with each Sahasranāman having many names that are not found in any other. There are some Sahasranāmans with all 1,000 names beginning from the same letter. There is even an Ayutanāman of Śiva with ten thousand names. The ocean of Sanskrit names is indeed unfathomable.

I started writing about Sanskrit names on social media in 2018. My first book on Sanskrit names was published in 2020. Over the last five years, I have collected more than two lakh names from more than 150 Sanskrit texts. My collection is

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still nowhere near completion. If I had to hazard a guess, I would say more than five lakh names are attested in Sanskrit texts. While this number is much higher than the nearly three lakh definitions and nearly two lakh unique words listed in the Monier-Williams Sanskrit-English dictionary (Oxford, 1899), it is much smaller than the estimated final word count of the Encyclopaedic Sanskrit Dictionary being compiled by Pune's Deccan College—twenty lakh words. If we consider all possible synonyms of the attested names and words of the opposite gender as that of the attested names, the number of Sanskrit names could well be above ten lakh.

Sanskrit texts are replete with beautiful names and epithets of not only humans and anthropomorphic beings like Devas, Devīs, Gaṇadevas (Ādityas, Viśvadevas, Vasus, Tuṣitas, Ābhāsvaras, Anilas or Maruts, Mahārājikas, Sādhyas and Rudras), and Upadevas (Vidyādharas, Apsaras', Yakṣas, Rākṣasas, Gandharvas, Kinnaras, Piśācas, Guhyakas, Siddhas, Bhūtas, etc.); but also of a wide range of non-human and non-anthropomorphic entities like forests, mountains, wells, lakes, rivers, oceans, regions, weapons, instruments, etc. The Bhagavad-Gītā mentions the mellifluous names of the conch shells (*śaikhas*) used by Kṛṣṇa and the five Pāṇḍava brothers in the Kurukṣetra war—Pāñcajanya (Kṛṣṇa), Devadatta (Arjuna), Pauṇḍra (Bhīma), Anantavijaya (Yudhiṣṭhira), Sughoṣa (Nakula) and Maṇipuṣpaka (Sahadeva). Numbers, too, have names in Sanskrit—the tens of synonyms of the words 'agni' ("fire") and 'bāṇa' ("an arrow") are all names of the numbers three and five, respectively. A large number

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can be expressed using many different names, some of them can even be adapted to specific poetic metres.

Most Sanskrit names and epithets are quite deep and thoughtful. Take for example the epithet ‘pathikṛt’ (पथिकृत्), which literally means “a path-maker”, i.e., a pioneer or an innovator. This epithet is used many a time in the Vedic texts for Bṛhaspati, Indra, Soma, Agni, Vaiśvānara, Pūṣaṅ and Ṛṣis. The name Pathikrit is given even today as a first name among Bengali families. The name of King Svanaya (स्वनय), mentioned twice in the Śākala-Saṃhitā of the Ṛgveda (hymns 1.125 and 1.126), means “he who is his own guide”, i.e., one who leads himself. In the past few years, this name has been given by many parents to their sons on my recommendation. Negative characters in Sanskrit texts also have meaningful, and often positive, names. The name Duryodhana (दुर्योधन, “difficult to fight against”), though usually avoided as a personal name (with some exceptions like Karnataka M.L.A. Duryodhan Mahalingappa Aihole), has a positive meaning which is attested by Arjuna’s taunt to Duryodhana in the Virāṭa-Parvan (verse 4.65.17 in the Gita Press edition) and corroborated by Medhātithi’s commentary on the Manusmṛti (verse 2.31). The hundreds of Sahasranāmans mentioned earlier contain thousands of mellifluous and profound names like Sanmayī (सन्मयी, “full of *sat* = truth, strength, life or conscience”), a name in the Pārvati-Sahasranāma of the Kūrma-Purāṇa (verse 1.11.138). I call such a name a ‘sunāma’ (nominative singular of the neuter Sanskrit word ‘sunāman’), i.e., “a good name”.

## Specialised Sources

How does one explore the ocean of Sanskrit names? The usual Sanskrit dictionaries are not very helpful as they list all roots and words, and not just names. There are many specialised indexes, dictionaries and books which exclusively deal with Sanskrit names. Many of these have been published in the past and continue to be published. In this section, I will list some notable ones, grouped by the major categories of Sanskrit names. The list of works covered here is only indicative and is by no means comprehensive.

### 1. Vedic names

Hundreds of epithets and names of deities, Ṛṣis and persons are found scattered throughout Vedic texts, which include Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads. The traditional sources for Vedic names are the various Anukramaṇīs. The Ṛgveda Anukramaṇī mentions the names of around four hundred seers of mantras (Ṛṣis). Out of these, around thirty names are feminine. The Ṛṣis of various Vedic mantras are also indicated in publications on Vedic Saṃhitās. The seventeen-volume Hindi translation of four Vedic Saṃhitās by Bhuvan Vani Trust lists the Ṛṣi of each mantra of Ṛgveda, Sāmaveda and Atharvaveda.

A concise modern resource for personal Vedic names is the small book *Proper Names of Persons in Vedic Literature* (Rabindra Bharati University, 2013) by Samiran Chandra Chakrabarti. This small 88-page book provides many insights into names found in Vedic texts and lists around 650 Vedic names in an index at the end. The *Vedic Index of Names*

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*and Subjects* (John Murray, 1912) by A. A. Macdonell and A. B. Keith has nearly 3,800 entries on Vedic names and subjects spread over 1,050 pages in two volumes. With many citations and opinions that are not beyond debate, the work is more useful for researchers and academics than for laypersons. Despite its impressive size, the compilation of Macdonell and Keith is not exhaustive. For example, the work does not list the beautiful name Ekarṣi (एकर्षि, “the pre-eminent Ṛṣi or seer”), a Guru mentioned twice in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad (mantras 2.6.3 and 4.6.3). Chakrabarti lists this name in his index. For Hindi readers, there are two books, both named *Vaidika Kośa* (वैदिक कोश). The first one (Chowkhamba Krishnadas Academy, 1963) is edited by Sūryakānta and the second (Nag Publishers, 1995) is compiled by Candraśekhara Upādhyāya and Anila Kumāra Upādhyāya. Sūryakānta includes many personal names in his work, while Upādhyāya and Upādhyāya focus more on words used as epithets for devas rather than names. As an example, the former lists the name Svanaya (mentioned earlier) but the latter does not. A difficulty experienced while using the work of Upādhyāya and Upādhyāya is that the order of words is somewhat different from the standard Devanagari alphabetical order seen in dictionaries. This can be confounding to a reader used to looking up Sanskrit or Hindi dictionaries.

### **2. Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata Names**

Like the Vedic texts, the two Itihāsa texts, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, abound with many beautiful names.

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*An Index to the Proper Names Occurring in Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇa* by Manmatha Natha Ray (Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, 1984) lists around 670 proper names from the Rāmāyaṇa. While the work is excellent, a major drawback is that it is incomplete and stops at the name Yūpākṣa (यूपक्ष), with a footnote saying “The Index in the Old Series is upto this portion only and as such is incomplete”. Around one-third of the names in the Rāmāyaṇa do not feature in this book. This estimate is arrived at using the relative frequency of words beginning with the remaining letters (‘r’, ‘l’, ‘v’, ‘ś’, ‘ṣ’, ‘s’ and ‘h’) in the Monier-Williams dictionary (see Appendix C) and the number of names with each letter in the dictionary *Vālmiki-Rāmāyaṇa-Kośaḥ* (वाल्मीकि-रामायण-कोशः, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Office, 1965) by Ramkumar Rai. Rai’s Hindi book has names and descriptions of 1,050 characters from the Rāmāyaṇa. Its three appendices list the names of 61 animals and birds, 108 plants and trees, and 127 weapons from the Rāmāyaṇa.

The Mahābhārata, four times as large as the Rāmāyaṇa, contains many more names. Several dictionaries list names in the Mahābhārata. Foremost among them is the brilliant work *An Index to the Names in the Mahābhārata* (Motilal Banarsidass, 1904) by Søren Sørensen. This dictionary has information on more than 12,500 characters and/or names in the Mahābhārata. For Hindi readers, the *Mahābhārata-kī Nāmānukramāṇikā* (महाभारतकी नामानुक्रमणिका, Gita Press, 1961) and Ramkumar Rai’s *Mahābhārata-Kośaḥ* (महाभारत-कोशः, Chowkhambha Sanskrit Series Office, 1964) are

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valuable resources. Like the work of Macdonell and Keith, the dictionaries by Sørensen and Rai have detailed entries with many quotes and citations that are extremely useful for scholars and researchers, but not so much for a lay reader looking for names from the Mahābhārata. The Gita Press dictionary is more concise. Despite all of them being great works, these dictionaries are not exhaustive. None of them lists Vidhitsu (विधित्सा, “eager to do or perform [something]”), a name of Lakṣmī revealed by Lakṣmī herself in the Mahābhārata (verse 12.225.7 in the Gita Press edition).

An outstanding work on names in the Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata and the Harivaṃśa is the Hindi book *Rāmāyaṇa evaṃ Mahābhārata-kā Śābdika Vīvecana* (रामायण एवं महाभारत का शाब्दिक विवेचन, Devanagar Prakashan, 1986) by Śivasāgara Tripāṭhī. Tripāṭhī has presented and analysed *vyutpattis* (grammatical derivations), *nirvacanas* (mystical explanations) and linguistic origins of 147 names from the three texts in great detail. His appendix lists around 600 names from these texts with their *nirvacanas*. While the number of names covered is smaller than in the dictionaries mentioned earlier, the depth of Tripāṭhī’s thought is awe-inspiring.

### 3. Purāṇic Names

The Purāṇas are one of the richest sources of Sanskrit names. There are both Sanātana and Jaina Purāṇas. I will cover the Sanātana Purāṇas (henceforth referred to as simply Purāṇas) here and the Jaina Purāṇas later. Combined together, the Purāṇas are three to four times larger than the Mahābhārata. One can safely assume that an index of all

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names in the Purāṇas would be far longer than the index of names in the Mahābhārata. There are several specialized dictionaries listing names in the Purāṇas.

Ramachandra Dikshitar's three-volume *The Purana Index* (University of Madras, 1951–1955) is a compilation of around 17,500 entries with almost 11,700 unique Purāṇic names. The work indexes only five Purāṇas (Bhāgavata, Brahmāṇḍa, Matsya, Vāyu and Viṣṇu) out of eighteen major Purāṇas and eighteen minor Purāṇas (Upapurāṇas). Disappointingly, Dikshitar's work is full of serious errors which betray the author's unfamiliarity with even basic Sanskrit. A few examples of egregious errors in this book are as follows. On page 409 of volume II, Dikshitar lists the name 'Pratima' [sic] and glosses it as "a sage of the second Sāvarṇa Manu", citing the Brahmāṇḍa-Purāṇa (4.1.70). The name in the referenced Brahmāṇḍa-Purāṇa verse is not Pratima but Apratima, as would be clear to anybody conversant with the rules of *sandhi* in Sanskrit. On page 473 of the same volume, Dikshitar lists (rather invents) the name 'Bahava' [sic] and glosses this entry as "son of Cakora", citing the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa (12.1.26). The verse in the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa refers to the Bahus, using the plural form *bahavaḥ*. The proper name is thus Bahu and not Bahava. On page 406 of volume III, Dikshitar lists the name Śāmbavī [sic], citing the Brahmāṇḍa-Purāṇa (4.13.26). The correct name is Śāmbhavī. These are just some of the many errors I have encountered in this work. Readers cannot rely blindly on Dikshitar's headwords and must cross-check the references with the text of the Purāṇas to be sure.

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The gold standard of Purāṇic dictionaries is *The Purāṇic Encyclopaedia* (Motilal Banarsidass, 1975) by Vettam Mani. This labour of love was originally published in five volumes in Malayalam. A true son of Sarasvatī, Mani spent eleven long years and twenty thousand rupees (equivalent to around eighteen to twenty lakh rupees today, in 2023) on this project. He started the compilation in 1955 and came out with the final fifth volume in Malayalam in 1966. The work was then translated into English by a committee of five scholars. The English translation indexes around 8,800 names from Itihāsa (Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata) and Purāṇa texts. Some references from Ānanda-Rāmāyaṇa and Kamba-Rāmāyaṇa are also included. The work is held in high esteem among scholars and is useful for laypersons also as Mani provides many details of the characters indexed.

For Hindi readers, Rāṇāprasāda Śarmā's *Paurāṇika Kośa* (पौराणिक कोश, Gyanmandal Limited, 1971) is an excellent reference to look up Purāṇic names. Like *The Purāṇic Encyclopaedia*, this work also includes names from the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata in addition to the Purāṇas. Śarmā gives unfamiliar geographical names, Buddhist names, Jaina names, and several dynasty trees in the appendices.

The *Itihāsa-Purāṇa Nirvacana Kośa* (इतिहास-पुराण निर्वचन कोष, Devanagar Prakashan, 1988) by the aforementioned Śivasāgara Tripāṭhī compiles the *nirvacanas* of 1,112 names from Itihāsa and Purāṇa texts. Despite its Hindi name, this book is entirely in Sanskrit. It is of immense value for Sanskrit students and scholars but not of much use to others.

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Another notable work in Hindi is the *Purāṇa Viṣaya Anukramaṇikā* (पुराण विषय अनुक्रमणिका), compiled by Radha Gupta, Suman Agarwal and Vipin Kumar. This dictionary has around 8,300 entries of names (along with some topics) from not only the Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata, the Harivaṃśa and the Purāṇas but also from many other later works like the Kathāsaritsāgara and the Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa-Saṃhitā.

Finally, an excellent work which lists many names from Vedas, Itihāsas, Smṛtis, Purāṇas, Sūtras and even Bauddha and Jaina texts is the *Bhāratavarṣiya Prācīna Caritrakośa* (भारतवर्षीय प्राचीन चरित्रकोश, Bharatiya Charittrakosha Mandal, 1964). Compiled by a team of scholars led by Mahamahopadhyaya Siddheshwar Shastri Chitrav, this 1,200-page dictionary (rather, encyclopaedia) in Hindi is an enlarged edition of the original Marathi book *Bhāratavarṣiya Prācīna Caritrakośa*, published by the same publisher in 1932. As per Chitrav's preface, the 1964 Hindi edition has 550 more pages than the original Marathi edition. The work is a product of incomparable dedication and remarkable scholarship. It indexes around 8,000 Sanskrit names. What sets it apart from other similar scholarly works like *The Purāṇic Encyclopaedia* is its wide coverage of names occurring in Vedic texts.

### 4. Vyākaraṇa Names

Another rich source of personal Sanskrit names is the body of Vyākaraṇa works like the Aṣṭādhyāyī, the Mahābhāṣya and the Kāśikā. Some Sanskrit names that were used historically in Bhārata but are no longer used today are recorded only in Vyākaraṇa works, which also record endearing forms and

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short forms of names. An example is the name Vāyudatta (वायुदत्त, “given by Vāyu”). Unlike today, parents in ancient Bhārata did not name children directly after deities but added a word like ‘datta’ or ‘rāta’ (दत्त or रात, “given by”) or ‘gupta’ (गुप्त, “protected by”) after the name of a deity. Names like Devadatta, Brahmadata and Śivadatta are very common in Sanskrit texts and are found in several Purāṇas. In contrast, I have not come across the name Vāyudatta in any Veda, Itihāsa or Purāṇa text. Vyākaraṇa works preserve this name, which would have been in vogue at some point in time and has now faded out of our cultural memory. Patañjali mentions this name twice in the Mahābhāṣya, under rules 4.2.104 and 5.3.8 of the Aṣṭādhyāyī, and gives its endearing form ‘vāyudattaka’ (वायुदत्तक) and its short form ‘vāyuka’ (वायुक). This points to the existence of short nicknames in the time of Patañjali. The Kāśikā also reads the name Vāyudatta in the *śubhrādigāṇa* under rule 4.1.123 of the Aṣṭādhyāyī. Many more such rare names are found in the various Gaṇa lists included in the Kāśikā. I am not aware of any comprehensive index of personal names found in the Vyākaraṇa works.

Many positive words which can be used as names are found in Vyākaraṇa works. Two examples are ‘prajit’ (“winning well”) and ‘pravit’ (“knowing well”), cited by the Kāśikā on rule 3.2.60 of the Aṣṭādhyāyī. Among major dictionaries, ‘prajit’ is listed only by Böhtlingk and Roth (1855), Böhtlingk (1879) and Monier-Wiliams (1899); while ‘pravit’ is not listed by any major Sanskrit dictionary.

## 5. Jaina Names

We next come to specialised books for Jaina names. The *Jaina Purāṇa Kośa* (जैन पुराण कोश, Jain Vidya Sansthan, 1993) in Hindi gives around 8,000 personal and geographical Sanskrit names from five Jaina texts: the Mahā-Purāṇa, the Padma-Purāṇa, the Harivaṃśa-Purāṇa, the Pāṇḍava-Purāṇa and the Vira-Varddhamāna-Carita. This meticulous work is quite reliable with hardly any noticeable errors.

Another rich source for Jaina names is the two-volume compilation *Prakrit Proper Names* (L.D. Institute of Indology, 1970) by Mohanlal Mehta and K. Rishabh Chandra. This dictionary contains around 8,000 Prakrit proper names from the Prakrit canonical texts of Śvetāmbara Jains. The compilers give their Sanskrit forms as well, and so this dictionary also belongs to the genre of Sanskrit name dictionaries. We find in this work many beautiful Prakrit names whose Sanskrit equivalents can be used as names. An example is the Prakrit name Aggisena (अग्गिसेन, Sanskrit Agnisena or अग्निसेन, “he whose army is [brilliant] like Agni or fire”), the name of a Tīrthaṅkara as per Jaina Prakrit texts. This is such a rare name today that there is only one person (a Jain) named Agnisen on LinkedIn, which has more than 10.5 crore LinkedIn users from India and more than 93 crore LinkedIn users globally, at the time of writing.

## 6. Other Sources of Sanskrit Names

Countless other names are found in the vast Sanskrit literature of various genres. For example, the Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharata Muni lists the names of one hundred sons (probably

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disciples who were treated as sons) of Bharata. Numerous other names are found in technical Sanskrit works and their commentaries. The plays and poems of Sāhityakāras like Kālidāsa have several characters with new names that are not found in other texts. Some satirical and hilarious names are found in the Pañcatantra, the Hitopadeśa and the many Prahāsanas like Hasyārṇava. The list is unending.

### 7. Nāmastotras and Nāmāvalis

By far, the richest sources of Sanskrit names are the various Nāmastotras and Nāmāvalis like Śatanāmans (compilations of hundred names), Aṣṭottaraśatanāmans (compilations of 108 names) and Sahasranāmans (compilations of one thousand names). Several such Nāmastotras are found in the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas. Many more are found in Tantra works and many have been compiled or composed as late as the twentieth and twenty-first century, e.g., the Indra-Sahasranāma by Vāsiṣṭha Gaṇapati Muni and the Go-Sahasranāma by my Guru, Jagadguru Svāmī Rāmabhadrācārya.

There are so many Nāmastotras that it is nearly impossible to compile an index of names in these stotras. As many as 215 Sahasranāmans and 178 Aṣṭottaraśatanāmans are available in Unicode on the Sanskrit Documents website alone. The names in just these Nāmastotras total up to more than two lakh thirty thousand (230,000), more than ten times the number of entries in any of the specialised name dictionaries mentioned earlier. Even after removing duplicate names, we will get at least one lakh unique names in these Nāmastotras alone.

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Most of these Nāmastotras are for Sanātana deities, but there are several Jaina Sahasranāmans as well. Some examples are the Arhannāmasahasra-Samuccaya (Ācārya Hemacandra), multiple Jina-Sahasranāmans (Ācārya Jinasena, Upādhyāya Vinayavijaya, Paṇḍita Āśādhara, Bhaṭṭāraka Sakalakīrti), the Pārśvanātha-Sahasranāma (Kalyāṇasāgara Sūri) and the Siddha-Sahasranāma.

Quite a few books have compilations of Nāmastotras. These books are often the easiest guides for parents to look up Sanskrit names. The Gita Press publications *Sahasranāma-stotra-saṃgraha* (सहस्रनामस्तोत्रसंग्रह, code number 1594) contains twenty-two Sahasranāmans and six Aṣṭottaraśatanāmans (compilations of 108 names) with a total of 22,843 names (some Sahasranāmans have more than a thousand names). A similar publication is the much smaller *Śatanama-stotra-saṃgraha* (शतनामस्तोत्रसंग्रह, code number 1850) which has forty-one Aṣṭottaraśatanāmans and two additional stotras with a total of 4,468 names. Together, these two books have more than 27,000 names. There are many other publications with Sahasranāmans and Śatanāmans. I will mention only the *Śivanāmamañjarī* (Sri Mahaperiyaval Trust, 2005). This book includes a *Sāmbasadāśivāyutanāmāvali* (साम्बसदाशिवायुतनामावलि), which is a compilation of 10,000 names of Śiva/Rudra from diverse texts including Vedas, Itihāsas, Purāṇas and many others. The compilation lists all its 10,000 names in the dative form and an elementary knowledge of Sanskrit is needed to know the basic form of the name.

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### 8. Historical Names

Finally, names of historical kings, queens and other people are also sources for Sanskrit names. Sometimes, such names are rare to find in Sanskrit texts. An example is Parāntaka (परान्तक, “the supreme destroyer” or “the destroyer of enemies”), a name shared by several medieval Pandyan and Chola kings. The name is found in only one Sanskrit source in my collection: in the Śiva-Sahasranāma of the Mahābhāgavata Purāṇa (verse 67.55). While Vajrāyudha (वज्रायुध, “he whose weapon is the Vajra”), the Sanskrit source of the name of King Vajiravudh (1881–1925) of Thailand, is attested in the Mahābhārata, the name Vajrālaṅkaraṇa (वज्रालङ्करण, “he whose ornament is the Vajra”), the Sanskrit source of the name of King Vajiralongkorn (1952–), is not found in any Sanskrit text in my collection. The *Personal and Geographical Names in the Gupta inscriptions* (Concept Publishing House, 1978) by Tej Ram Sharma is a compilation of around 500 epigraphic names but covers only the Gupta inscriptions. I am not aware of any large work (comparable in size to the works mentioned earlier) which indexes Sanskrit names of historical people as attested in epigraphic evidence.

### Challenges in Finding the Right Sunāma

Even if a layperson has access to the above specialised sources and dictionaries, finding a Sanskrit name for their child or business is not easy. The specialised dictionaries on Vedic, Itihāsic and Purāṇic names have many detailed descriptions, quotations and references. The reader has to skip many lines, sometimes even pages, to get to the next name.

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Another challenge with using these specialised dictionaries is that they list names of negative characters also. Names like Rāvaṇa, Tāṭakā, Duryodhana, Jarāsandha, Kaṃsa, Pūtanā, etc. would hardly be acceptable to readers looking for a name. Being encyclopaedic resources for scholars and researchers rather than name sources for parents and entrepreneurs, the specialised dictionaries list all such names.

A major issue with the specialised sources and dictionaries (with the exception of the Nāmastotra books by Gita Press) is that the entries in them are overwhelmingly masculine. As an example, the Ṛgveda Anukramaṇī has around four hundred names, out of which only around thirty are feminine names. While I do not have the exact number, my estimate is that the number of masculine names in Sanskrit texts is around twice or thrice that of feminine names. This is expected, for be it the Vedas, the Itihāsas, the Purāṇas or other works in Sanskrit literature, we come across far more males than females. To get an almost equal number of masculine and feminine names from these texts, one has to convert many masculine names to feminine names and vice versa. In some exceptional cases, the feminine version of a masculine name or the masculine version of a feminine name may not exist. However, this conversion is possible in the majority of the cases and gives us many new names which are not attested in Sanskrit literature. Take for example the aforementioned name Svanaya (स्वनय, “self-guided”). When I wrote about this name on social media in 2019, I also mentioned the feminine version of the name as Svanayā (स्वनया). I have not come across the name Svanayā

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in any Sanskrit works. However, nothing prevents us from using this feminine name which only differs in gender from Svanaya. The two Nāmastotra books by Gita Press are almost perfectly balanced from the perspective of masculine and feminine names. They also have names of deities which are mostly positive. The *Sahasranāma-stotra-saṃgraha* has eleven Sahasranāmans each of masculine and feminine deities. The *Śatanama-stotra-saṃgraha* has twenty-one Aṣṭottaraśatanāmans of masculine deities, eighteen of feminine deities and one unique Aṣṭottaraśatanāman of Ardhanārīśvara with masculine and feminine names alternating.

Despite these advantages, there are several challenges with looking up names in Nāmastotras and Nāmāvalīs. Firstly, an elementary knowledge of Sanskrit is needed to isolate a name and/or get the right form of the name to use. The reason is that the names in the original Nāmastotra verses are phonologically combined with each other by *sandhis* while the Nāmāvalīs list the dative forms of the names and not the base forms. A second issue is that sometimes these Nāmastotras have words with negative meanings, plural forms, or opposite genders. So, a name has to be chosen with care even from these Nāmastotras. The Nāmastotras and Nāmāvalīs contain many names, especially those beginning with rarely used initial letters (more on this in the next section), which appear synthetic and not natural. Finally, many names in Nāmastotras are long compounds. As an example, the Lalitā-Sahasranāma of the Brahmāṇḍa-Purāṇa has 324 names (almost one-third) that have eight or more

syllables. Of these, seventy-two names are sixteen syllables long. Compare this with specialised name dictionaries where almost 95% names (a rough estimate) have five or fewer syllables. Long names in Nāmastotras and Nāmāvalīs need to be broken down correctly into shorter parts so that one or more of the parts may be used as a name. Often, this process requires advanced knowledge of not only Sanskrit but also of the meaning and the background context of the name.

### **Nakṣatras, Rāśīs and Names**

Nakṣatra-based names have been common in Bhārata for millennia. For a quick overview of ancient Indian names, including Nakṣatra names, the reader may refer to the preface of my book *Sunāma: Beautiful Sanskrit Names* (Bloomsbury, 2020). The Nakṣatra name was usually based on the name of the Nakṣatra (or the deity associated with the Nakṣatra). Some examples of names derived from the name of the Nakṣatra are Caitra (चैत्र, “associated with Citrā”, for a boy born under the Citrā Nakṣatra), Rohiṇa or Rauhiṇa (रोहिण or रौहिण, “associated with Rohiṇī”, for a boy born under the Rohiṇī Nakṣatra) and Tiṣyarakṣitā (तिष्यरक्षिता, “protected by Tiṣya = Puṣya”, for a girl born under the Puṣya Nakṣatra). The last name was the name of the chief queen of King Aśoka. A famous example of a Nakṣatra name from the Mahābhārata (verse 4.43.16 in the Gita Press edition) is Arjuna’s name Phālguna, as he was born under the Uttarā Phalgunī Nakṣatra.

These examples are very different from the current-day scheme (see Appendix A) that associates specific initial sounds with Nakṣatra Caraṇas. The current-day association

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is often called the *avakahaḍācakra*. In *Indian Numismatics* (Orient Longman, 1981), D. D. Kosambi calls it the *avakahaḍ-cakra* and says that he could not trace a source for this older than the *Samarasāra* of Rāmacandra Somayāji/Vājapeyī, who lived in the 15th century CE. In *Personal and Geographical Names in the Gupta inscriptions*, Tej Ram Sharma also says that the assignment of letters to each Pāda of a Nakṣatra is present in some medieval Jyotiṣa works.

I have been unable to find any association of syllables and Nakṣatra Caraṇas in ancient textual sources like the Gṛhya-Sūtras, which deal with Nakṣatra names and have many guidelines for naming. In fact, many Gṛhya-Sūtras recommend that names should start with sonants (*ghoṣa* consonants), while the *avakahaḍācakra* has many surds (*aḥhoṣa* consonants). The Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali mentions rules of naming prevalent at that time but not the association of specific syllables with Caraṇas of the Nakṣatras. As per various Jyotiṣa works (see Appendix A), the initial sounds recommended for the Uttarā Phalgunī Nakṣatra, Arjuna's birth Nakṣatra, are 'ṭe' (टे), 'ṭo' (टो), 'pā' (पा) and 'pī' (पी). 'Phā' (फा), the initial sound of Arjuna's Nakṣatra name Phālguna, is recommended for the Purvāṣāḍhā Nakṣatra. The fact that Arjuna's Nakṣatra name was not based on the initial sounds associated today with the Nakṣatra but rather the name of the Nakṣatra is proof that the current system of associating Nakṣatra Caraṇas with initial sounds and/or letters was not prevalent in the time of the Mahābhārata and was a much later, most likely medieval, development.

In addition, the *avakahaḍācakra* scheme makes little linguistic sense. The short vowels ‘a’ (अ), ‘i’ (इ), ‘u’ (उ), ‘ṛ’ (ऋ) and ‘ṛ’ (ऌ) together account for the initial sounds of around 13% of all Sanskrit words (see Appendix C for the frequency distribution of initial sounds in Sanskrit words). They are altogether omitted in the *avakahaḍācakra* in works like *Bṛhadavakahaḍācakra*. The common consonant ‘ś’ (श), which is the initial letter for around 5% words in Sanskrit, is also omitted from the set of initial sounds. For as many seventeen Nakṣatra Caraṇas out of 112, the scheme has syllables beginning with the consonant sounds ‘ṅ’ (ङ), ‘jh’ (झ), ‘ñ’ (ञ), ‘ṭ’ (ट), ‘ṭh’ (ठ), ‘ḍ’ (ड), ‘ḍh’ (ढ), ‘ṇ’ (ण) and ‘th’ (थ), which, taken together, are the initial sounds for just around 0.25% words in Sanskrit. There are hardly any natural names beginning with these consonants in any Veda, Itihāsa, or Purāṇa text. The few names that do begin with these sounds are found in Nāmastotras and Nāmāvalīs which include them only for the sake of complete coverage of initial sounds. The syllables recommended for Āśleṣā Nakṣatra are ‘ḍi’ (डी), ‘ḍū’ (दू), ‘ḍe’ (डे) and ‘ḍo’ (डो), which together account for the initial sound of less than 0.1% of words in Sanskrit. Every parent who comes to me with hopes of finding good names for Āśleṣā Nakṣatra is disappointed when I tell them the truth that there are hardly any good, or even usable, Sanskrit names beginning with these retroflex sounds. Some open-minded (and perhaps right-thinking) Jyotiṣa practitioners make concessions like allowing the use of ‘g’ (ग), ‘j’ (ज) and ‘ḍ’ (ड) in place of ‘ṅ’ (ङ), ‘ñ’ (ञ) and ‘ṇ’ (ण), respectively, as

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the initial letter of the name for specific Nakṣatra Caraṇas. Not willing to be outdone, the conservative ones like Paṇḍita Sītārāma Śarmā call them misguided and stress that the Nakṣatra names for these Nakṣatra Caraṇas must begin with 'n' (न), 'ñ' (ञ) and 'ṇ' (ण), without giving a single example of such names.

Though scholars and grammarians in ancient and medieval Bhārata did not have the computation tools of today, they certainly had a good idea of which letters and syllables are common at the beginning of words and names and which are rare. For a scholar of Sanskrit, it does not require knowledge of statistics to know that there are thousands of Sanskrit words and names beginning with 's' (स), 'p' (प) and 'v' (व); and that hardly any words and names start with 'th' (थ), 'ṭh' (ठ) and 'ḍh' (ड). The question that then arises is which rational Sanskrit scholar would allot initial sounds to Nakṣatra Caraṇas in such an irrational way that there are thousands of candidate names for some Nakṣatra Caraṇas and hardly any for many others? A grammarian would have never devised such an illogical system.

Narayan Prasad, a Pune-based polyglot and polymath scholar of many fields including both Vyākaraṇa and Jyotiṣa, has raised some other important questions on the *avakhaḍā-cakra*. He asks why two sounds are shifted to the end, why short vowel mātrās are almost entirely omitted, why some odd syllables are inserted between regular patterns, why some sequences with a consonant are randomly started and randomly terminated, etc. There are no answers.

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The initial letters currently used for Rāśis loosely correspond to the *avakahaḍācakra* of Nakṣatra Caraṇas. It is believed, and for good reason, that Rāśis were introduced to ancient Indians by the Greeks. The Vedic texts mention Nakṣatras but no Rāśis. Many other ancient Sanskrit texts like the Gṛhya-Sūtras and even medieval texts like Sāyaṇa's commentary on the Śākala-Saṃhitā of the Ṛgveda mention the Nakṣatra name, and not the Rāśi name, as one of the names. Even the Sanskrit names for all the Rāśis (except Makara) have the exact same meanings as the names of the corresponding Western zodiac signs. Nakṣatra being the older concept, the system of initial sounds for the Rāśis (see Appendix B) would have developed after the corresponding system for the Nakṣatras. Irrespective of whether it came before or after the Nakṣatra system, the Rāśi system of initial sounds is equally, if not more, illogical. There is no dearth of great names for Meṣa Rāśi, for which the initial letters in many Jyotiṣa books are 'a' (अ), 'l' (ल) and 'i' (इ), which together account for the initial sounds of around 11% Sanskrit words. In stark contrast, the options for Karka Rāśi are far fewer as the letters 'h' (ह) and 'd' (ड) together account for the initial sounds of less than 2% Sanskrit words.

This whole arbitrary system seems to have been devised by one or more Jyotiṣa writers whose idea of initial sounds in Sanskrit words and names was far from perfect. The linguistic expertise of Jyotiṣa practitioners has often been questioned. A hilarious *subhāṣita* mocks the bad Sanskrit knowledge of astrologers and clubs them with actors, paramours, singers

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and physicians thus—“Terrified by the hunter that is the grammarian, where would the beasts that are ungrammatical words go were it not for the caverns that are the mouths of astrologers, actors, paramours, singers and physicians?”

Notwithstanding its weak linguistic foundations, the association of Nakṣatra Caraṇas and Rāśis with specific initial sounds remains popular. I have included the Nakṣatra syllables and Rāśi letters in appendices A and B for the sake of completeness.

### **The Best Approach**

Suggesting Sanskrit names is as much an art as a science. In addition to technical knowledge of Sanskrit texts and Sanskrit grammar, one needs creativity to think of synonyms or equivalent words of existing names or create new words which can be used as names from existing words and names. Therefore, the best approach for laypersons to select a Sanskrit name is to consult a family elder, a scholar, an Ācārya or a Guru who is well-versed in Sanskrit or their mother tongue and well-read in Sāhitya and/or Sanātana, Bauddha or Jaina scriptures. Over the last four years, I have personally offered more than 1,200 consultations for children and business names to parents and entrepreneurs. Each consultation is an enriching experience and has contributed to the compilation of the Sunāma series of books.

No book, dictionary, website, application or artificial intelligence chatbot comes even remotely close to human intelligence when it comes to finding the perfect name that parents or entrepreneurs are seeking. An example to illustrate

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this point would not be out of place. A few months ago, I was helping parents in Bengaluru select a Sanskrit name for their newborn daughter. They wanted the name to be authentic and meaningful but also preferred it to have elements of the father's name Pramod (Sanskrit *pramoda*, प्रमोद), the mother's name Shrvanthi (Sanskrit *śrāvanti*, श्रावन्ती) and the grandmother's name Sandhya (Sanskrit *sandhyā*, सन्ध्या). After a lot of thought and a long interactive name search for nearly an hour, I finally stumbled across the perfect name for the daughter—Pravandya (Sanskrit *pravandyā*, प्रवन्द्या, “eminently venerable or praiseworthy”). Like a divinely ordained name that met all the wishes of the parents, the name had the sound ‘pra’ from the beginning of the father's name, ‘van’ from the middle of the mother's name and the ending ‘dyā’ which was very similar to the ending ‘dhyā’ of the grandmother's name. The word, or its masculine version, is not listed in any major Sanskrit dictionary. However, it is a valid word as any grammarian would attest. In addition, it is the last part of the name *brahmopendra-pravandyā* (ब्रह्मोपेन्द्रप्रवन्द्या, “eminently venerable for Brahmā and Viṣṇu”) in the Lalitā-Sahasranāma of the Devīpurāṇa or Mahābhāgavata (verse 23.110).

### The Sunāma Series

There are few authentic books on Sanskrit names that are written by scholars and can be used by laypersons. Maneka Gandhi's two books, *The Penguin Book of Hindu Names for Boys* and *The Penguin Book of Hindu Names for Girls* have many mistakes. I have listed some of them in the preface of my previous book *Sunāma*. The multiple Hindu name books by

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Vijay Kumar are so full of errors that they are not even worth discussing. *Thought Provoking Hindu Names* (Star Publications, 2008) by the highly qualified couple Ramesh C. Dogra and Urmila Dogra has many schoolboy errors, often many on the same page. For example, on page 220, the first name is printed erroneously and inconsistently in Roman and Devanagari as ‘Surachirta’ [sic] and सुरचित्र [sic] respectively. From the meaning “worshipped by celestials”, the name should be ‘Surārchita’ or ‘Surārcita’ in Roman and सुरार्चित in Devanagari. The second name on the page is also printed erroneously in both Roman and Devanagari as ‘Surādhās’ [sic] and सुराधास [sic] respectively. The correct name spelling is ‘Surādhas’ in Roman and सुरधस् in Devanagari. The third name is also spelt wrong on this page, which lists a neuter form as a feminine name. Many more such errors can be spotted on other pages. The Hindi book *Śabdeśvarī: Devī Devatāḥ Ke Nāmō Kā Samāntara Kośa* (शब्देश्वरी: देवी देवताओं के नामों का समान्तर कोश, Rajkamal Prakashan, 1999) seems to be a good work but is difficult to get. I had decided to compile the Sunāma series of books partly due to the lack of authentic books for laypersons on Sanskrit names and partly to address the misinformation about Sanskrit names present on the Internet.

As mentioned earlier, this is the second book in my Sunāma series, the first being *Sunāma* (Bloomsbury, 2020), which has seen a heartening response with six reprints so far. Soon after *Sunāma* was published, I had plans to compile the *Sunāma-Sāgara* (“the ocean of good names”) with one lakh Sanskrit names. Three years later, this ambitious project is

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yet to take off. Even if started, it will take me many years to complete just like Vettam Mani's *The Purāṇic Encyclopaedia* took eleven years. In the meantime, I had been regularly receiving requests from readers to write an enlarged version of *Sunāma*. Considering these requests, I decided to bring out this book *Sunāma-Sarit* ("the river of good names"), with exactly ten thousand names. It is more than three times larger than *Sunāma*, which had around 3,000 names. Among the 10,000 names in *Sunāma-Sarit*, around 1,000 names have featured earlier in *Sunāma* and the rest are new.

Like *Sunāma*, this book also avoids names of villainous human and non-human beings. Hence, names like Rāvaṇa (रावण) and Indrajit (इन्द्रजित्) are not present in this book. Exceptions have been made for names that are shared by both villainous and heroic human and/or non-human beings. An example is the name Baka (बक). The name is shared by many positive and negative characters in Sanātana texts. In the Mahābhārata itself, Baka is the name of a Rākṣasa killed by Bhīma, of Dharma as the Yakṣa or crane who questions Yudhiṣṭhira, of a Ṛṣi with the patronymic Dālbhya, of a Muni has a conversation with Indra and of a people. As there are several positive characters with this name, I have included it in the book. Similarly, the name Trinetra (त्रिनेत्र) is both a name of Śiva and the name of a minister of Mahiṣāsura. I have not let the negative citation impact its inclusion. The citations given in both *Sunāma* and *Sunāma-Sarit* make it clear that the names have been used positively in the source texts.

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### **What is New in Sunāma-Sarit?**

To address the concerns of some readers of *Sunāma*, to facilitate the ease of looking up names and to prevent the price of this book from being too high, I have made several changes to this book as compared to *Sunāma*.

These days, parents often seek short names that are at most three syllables long. All the 10,000 names in this book are of one syllable, two syllables or three syllables. In comparison, around 35% of the names in *Sunāma* were of four or more syllables. It is worth noting that the highest number of names in Sanskrit are four syllables long. There are many masculine names like Tejasvin or Tejasvī (तेजस्विन् or तेजस्वी) whose feminine form Tejasvinī (तेजस्विनी) has four syllables. To compensate for this imbalance and also for the the aforementioned gender imbalance in attested Sanskrit names, I had to convert many more masculine names to feminine (1,003) than feminine names to masculine (73). While the Gṛhya-Sūtras recommend giving a name with an odd number of syllables to a girl and one with an even number of syllables to a boy (along with many other rules and restrictions for names), such rules were frequently violated, as Tej Ram Sharma notes in the Prologue of *Personal and Geographical Names in the Gupta inscriptions*. Like many names in the Vedas, the Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas, many names in this book do not comply with the guidelines in the Gṛhya-Sūtras. At the same time, there are enough names in the book that do comply with the Gṛhya-Sūtra rules and may be used by those who wish to follow the Sūtras.

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A second change made in the book is that girl names and boy names have been separated into two different parts. This facilitates the ease of searching for names of a specific gender. In *Sunāma*, the masculine and feminine names were listed together, with some entries having a masculine headword with the feminine form at the end of the entry and some others having a feminine headword with the masculine form at the end. Some parents had remarked that this made it difficult for them to look for just boy names or just girl names.

Another change made in this book is that there is an equal number of masculine and feminine names not only at the book level (5,000 each), but also for each initial letter. For example, there are 641 masculine names and 641 feminine names starting with 's' (स). In comparison, around 49% of the names in *Sunāma* were feminine and 51% were masculine. The distribution of number of names for all initial letters in this book roughly corresponds to the frequency distribution of initial letters of words in the 1890 Monier-Williams dictionary. This is shown in Appendix C.

Instead of indicating the exact source of the name, as I did in *Sunāma*, I have cited only the category of the original text with simple abbreviations like V (for Vedic texts), R (for Rāmāyaṇa), M (for Mahābhārata), P (for Purāṇas), JP (for Jaina Purāṇas), N (for Nāmastotras), etc. I would have loved to include the full citations for each name with part, chapter and verse or stanza numbers, but doing so for around 21,000 citations would have significantly increased the page count and the price of the book.

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Name meanings, present in *Sunāma*, have been omitted in this book with the exception of some names, usually those without any citations. This has been done largely to limit the number of pages and the price of the book and also for faster browsing through thousands of names. This book is already more than 500 pages long without the meanings. With the meanings, it would be more than 650 pages long as many names have meanings that cannot be expressed in one or two words. It is noteworthy that the specialised name dictionaries mentioned previously and the Nāmastotra books do not include name meanings. This is a compromise I have had to make to accommodate the large number of names in the book. The name meanings can be looked up in standard Sanskrit dictionaries or checked with Sanskrit scholars. The best sources to know multiple meanings of Sanskrit names are the Sanskrit commentaries on Nāmastotras.

### **The Nectar is in the Meaning**

Meanings of Sanskrit names are sometimes too deep to be covered in a dictionary like this book. It is not unoften that the meaning of a word when used as a name is very different from the meanings of the same word when used in other contexts. Take for example the name Anaya (अनय), which is the 400th name in the Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma of the Mahābhārata's Anuśāsanaparvan (verse 13.149.56 in the Gita Press edition). The word 'anaya' usually has negative meanings in Sanskrit. As per the Apte dictionary, it means (1) "bad management or conduct; injustice; unfairness" (2) "bad policy or course of conduct, evil course" (3) "adversity, calamity, distress"

(4) “misfortune, adversity; ill-luck” (5) “a variety of dice-play, gambling” (6) “a deceit, fraud”. Each and every meaning listed by Apte (and other dictionaries) is negative. However, these negative meanings cannot be associated with the name Anaya of Viṣṇu. As a name of Viṣṇu, the word has to be understood as an exocentric compound (*bahuvrīhi samāsa*) with the meaning “he who has no [other] leader”, i.e., he who is the supreme leader. The commentary attributed to Ādi Śaṅkarācārya says on this name that “He is Anaya who has no leader or commander” (नास्य नेता विद्यत इत्यनयः). The sense is one who leads or commands others but is not led or commanded himself. Parāśara Bhaṭṭa says in his versified commentary that Viṣṇu is Anaya as he cannot be lifted or carried by enemies (असुहृद्भिर्नयो यस्य नास्तीत्यनय उच्यते), a reference to Rāvaṇa not being able to move Lakṣmaṇa’s body in the Rāmāyaṇa. He gives another meaning, parsing the name as ‘an’ + ‘aya’. The word ‘aya’ means “recourse”, and the name Anaya as per Parāśara Bhaṭṭa means “he apart from whom the worlds (= beings ) have no recourse” (अथवा जगतामस्मादयो नान्यस्ततोऽनयः). Satyasandha Yatirāja gives two explanations of the name Anaya in his commentary. He says that Anaya means he who is not led by others but who leads himself, being the most supreme (नयतीति स्वस्थैवोत्तमत्वादन्यस्मिन्न विद्यते नयो यस्य सः). The second derivation is from ‘ana’ + ‘ya’, with ‘ana’ meaning Prāṇa or Vāyu (breath or lifeforce) or earth, and ‘ya’ coming from the causative form of the root √‘yā’ = “to go, to obtain”. Yatirāja explains that he who enables others to get Prāṇa or Vāyu and earth (probably signifying birth)

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is Anaya. Yatirāja implies that it is Viṣṇu who gives beings the ability to breathe and live. Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa in his commentary says that ‘aya’ here means “good fortune or good luck” (शुभावहो विधिः), and “he except whom there is no good fortune or good luck is Anaya” (नास्त्ययः शुभावहो विधिरन्यो यदपेक्षयेत्यनयः). Finally, the commentary of Satyadeva Vāsiṣṭha also gives two explanations. The first one is that while Viṣṇu leads all the Ātmans to different forms (bodies), he is himself not led [by anyone] and stays firm, hence he is called Anaya. The second explanation parses the name as ‘an’ + ‘aya’ with ‘aya’, from the root √‘i’ = “to go”, meaning “he who moves” (= from one body to another) and ‘anaya’ meaning “he who does not move”, i.e., he who is firm. These are the various meanings of but a single name Anaya. How can this essence be provided for ten thousand names in a book?

## Acknowledgements

Not only does this book has thousands of names, but the list of names of people who helped me write this book also runs into thousands. I have learned so much from the 1,200 name consultations I have offered over the last four years to parents and business owners. I thank all of them for giving me an opportunity to delve deeper into the ocean of Sanskrit names. My children and my parents have been my pillar of strength in all my writing projects. They have my lifelong gratitude. For researching names in this book, Dr. Rajendra Pratap Singh of Yogaytan Group, Mumbai, kindly loaned me a copy of the *Bhāratavarṣīya Prācīna Caritrakośa* from his personal library of more than 10,000 books. I thank

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Dr. Singh from the bottom of my heart. Under the leadership of Sh. Sudhir Kuduchkar, the team of Three Dot Designs, Ahmedabad, came up with several great designs for the book cover in just one day. One of the designs, which was also Sh. Kuduchkar's preferred design, was chosen by a popular vote on my social media accounts. I thank Sudhir Kuduchkar and the Three Dot Designs team for coming up with the cover design options and all social media users who helped choose the cover for their valuable contribution. This book was delayed by a couple of weeks as halfway in the midst of working on it, I suffered a double tooth luxation injury when I fell down while playing tennis. I have no words to thank Dr. Kavita Kamraj whose dextrous treatment is helping me recover. The Gosahasranāma by my Guru never fails to amaze me and is a source of many names in this book. I am forever indebted to him for introducing me to this phenomenal work and for always inspiring me in my writing journey. Shivani Attri has contributed in many ways to this book right from its conceptualisation and I owe her much more than I can ever pay back. Lastly, I express my sincere thanks to all readers and viewers who have motivated me to write more and more; without them and their support, I would be nothing.

Nityānanda Miśra  
Mumbai, 15 July 2023



## Note to the Reader

For the commonly followed association of initial syllables or letters with Nakṣatras or Rāśis, please refer to appendices A and B on pages 497 and 499, respectively. I also suggest the reader to peruse the section *Nakṣatras, Rāśis and Names* from page 18 onwards.

This book uses the International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration (IAST) scheme to transliterate Sanskrit words and names. A transliteration key is not provided as the IAST scheme can be easily learned from the Wikipedia page on IAST or numerous other online resources.

Names are given in both Devanagari and IAST. The eventual English spelling of the name is left to the discretion of the reader. The *Modern Anomalies* section in the preface of my previous book, *Sunāma: Beautiful Sanskrit Names*, has a discussion on some common spelling practices.

As is the standard practice in Indic dictionaries, names are listed in the Devanagari alphabetical order, starting with 'a' (अ) and ending with 'h' (ह). The header on each page shows the first and the last names on the page. If needed, the Devanagari alphabetical order can also be learned from the Wikipedia page on Devanagari.

For names whose base form or lemma ends with a vowel (*ajanta* names), I list the base form and not the inflected

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nominative singular form (e.g., *hari* and *lakṣmī*, not *hariḥ* and *lakṣmīḥ*). The exceptions to this practice are names whose base form ends with the vowel *r*. For such names, I list the nominative singular form (e.g., *vidhātā*, not *vidhāṭr*).

For names whose base form ends with a consonant (*halanta* names), if the inflected form ends in a *visarga*, I list the base form (e.g., *sutapas*, not *sutapāḥ*). In the other cases, I list either the inflected nominative singular form or the base form or both forms. This approach helps in most names being familiar to readers and also in avoiding the *visarga*, which is prone to mispronunciation and can cause confusion.

To understand the citation(s) for a name, please refer to the Abbreviations table on page 35.

Except for names for which there are no citations, name meanings are not given in this book. Wherever given, meanings are enclosed within double quotes. The standard Sanskrit dictionaries can be used to know the meanings of the names. Note that Sanskrit dictionaries do not list all names in this book and may not list all the meanings of the names they list. For more, read the section *The Nectar is in the Meaning* from page 29 onwards.



# Abbreviations

<b>ĀR</b>	Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa
<b>B</b>	Bauddha texts
<b>H</b>	Historical person
<b>J</b>	Jaina texts
<b>JA</b>	Jaiminiya Aśvamedhaparvan
<b>JP</b>	Jaina Purāṇas
<b>K</b>	Kośas (Amarakoṣa, Vācaspatya, Apte, etc.)
<b>M</b>	Mahābhārata of Vyāsa
<b>N</b>	Nāmastotras (Sahasranāmans, etc.)
<b>NŚ</b>	Nāṭyaśāstra
<b>P</b>	Sanātana Purāṇas (including Harivaṃśa)
<b>Prā</b>	Prātiśākhya
<b>R</b>	Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmiki
<b>Rāj</b>	Rājatarāṅgiṇī
<b>S</b>	Sūtra texts (Śrautasūtras, Gṛhyasūtras)
<b>Sā</b>	Sāhitya texts (poems, plays, etc.)
<b>V</b>	Vedic texts (Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, major Upaniṣads, Anukramaṇīs, etc.)
<b>Vyā</b>	Vyākaraṇa texts
<b>YV</b>	Yogavāsiṣṭha





# **Part I**

## **Masculine Names**



## अ (a)

- अंश (amśa) ▶ Agni (V); a Deva (P); a Ṛṣi (P); an Āditya (P)
- अंशक (amśaka) ▶ Gaṇeśa (N)
- अंशु (amśu) ▶ name of many men and Devas (V, P); Sūrya (N); Śiva (N)
- अंशुमान् (amśumān) ▶ name of many men and Devas (M, P); Ardhanārīśvara (N); Skanda (N); Sūrya (N); Viṣṇu (N)
- अंशुल (amśula) ▶ Cāṇakya (K)
- अकर (akara) ▶ Śiva (N)
- अकर्ता (akartā) ▶ Jina (N); Kāla (N)
- अकल (akala) ▶ Dattātreyā (N); Lakṣmaṇa (N); Śiva (N)
- अकल्प (akalpa) ▶ Indra (V)
- अकाम (akāma) ▶ Kṛṣṇa (N); Pārśvanātha (N)
- अकाय (akāya) ▶ Hanumān (N); Kāla (N); Rāma (N); Śiva (N)
- अकार (akāra) ▶ Kṛṣṇa (M); Aghora (N); Śiva (N); Viṣṇu (N)
- अकुण्ठ (akunṭha) ▶ Śiva (N)
- अकुल (akula) ▶ Kāla (N); Śiva (K)
- अकूल (akūla) ▶ Dattātreyā (N)
- अकृत (akṛta) ▶ Dattātreyā (N); Śiva (N)
- अकृष्ट (akṛṣṭa) ▶ a class of Ṛṣis (M)
- अकोप (akopa) ▶ a minister of Daśaratha (R); Pārśvanātha (N)
- अक्र (akra) ▶ Agni (V)
- अक्रम (akrama) ▶ Kṛṣṇa (N)
- अक्रिय (akriya) ▶ a king (P); Jina (N); Śiva (N)
- अक्रूर (akrūra) ▶ a Nāga (P); a Yādava (P); Kṛṣṇa (N); Nṛsiṃha (N); Viṣṇu (N)

**सुक्षत्र (sukṣatra)** ▶ Indra (V); a king (M, P)

**सुख (sukha)** ▶ Gaṇeśa (N); Hanumān (N); Kṛṣṇa (N); Viṣṇu (N)

**सुखद (sukhada)** ▶ Aghora (N); Jina (N); Rāma (N); Skanda (N); Sūrya (N); Viṣṇu (N)

**सुखिन्/सुखी (sukhin/sukhi)** ▶ Dattātreya (N); Gaṇeśa (N); Hanumān (N); Kṛṣṇa (N); Naṭeśa (N); Rāma (N); Skanda (N); Sūrya (N); Śiva (N); Viṣṇu (N)

**सुगण (sugaṇa)** ▶ a prince (K)

**सुगत (sugata)** ▶ Jina (N); Śiva (N)

**सुगति (sugati)** ▶ a king (P); Jina (N); Sūrya (N)

**सुगन्ध (sugandha)** ▶ a Yakṣa (P); Baṭukabhairava (N)

**सुगम (sugama)** ▶ Kāla (N); Rāma (N)

**सुगम्य (sugamya)** ▶ Indra (V)

**सुगुण (suguṇa)** ▶ Kṛṣṇa (N); Śiva (N)

**सुगुप्त (sugupta)** ▶ Jina (N)

**सुग्रह (sugraha)** ▶ Aghora (N)

**सुग्रीव (sugrīva)** ▶ the king of Vānaras (R); name of many men (P); Balarāma (N); Skanda (N); Śiva (N); Viṣṇu (N)

**सुघोर (sughora)** ▶ Nṛsiṃha (N); Śiva (N)

**सुघोष (sughoṣa)** ▶ the Śaṅkha of Nakula (M); Jina (N); Rāma (N); Śiva (N); Viṣṇu (N); a Buddha (K)

**सुचक्र (sucakra)** ▶ a warrior of Skanda (M)

**सुचन्द्र (sucandra)** ▶ Agni (V); name of many men (P)

**सुचल (sucala)** ▶ a king (P)

**सुचारु (sucāru)** ▶ a son of Rukmiṇī and Kṛṣṇa (P); name of many men (P); Kṛṣṇa (N)

**सुचित्त (sucitta)** ▶ Ācārya Sucitta Śailana (V)

- हेम (hema) ▶ Balarāma (N); Śiva (N); Buddha (K)
- हेमक (hemaka) ▶ a Nāga (P)
- हेमद (hemada) ▶ Viṣṇu (N)
- हेमन्त (hemanta) ▶ a son of Brahmā (P); Kāla (N); Kṛṣṇa (N);  
Sūrya (N)
- हेमवान् (hemavān) ▶ a Varṣaparvata (P)
- हेमाङ्ग (hemāṅga) ▶ Śiva (N); Viṣṇu (N); Brahmā (K); Garuḍa  
(K)
- हेमाद्रि (hemādri) ▶ a commentator on Raghuvamśa (H)
- हेमाभ (hemābha) ▶ Jina (N)
- हेरम्ब (heramba) ▶ Aghora (N); Gaṇeśa (N); Gaṇeśa (K)
- हैम (haima) ▶ Sūrya (N); Śiva (N); Viṣṇu (N)
- होता (hotā) ▶ Agni (V); Śiva (M); Hanumān (N); Kāla (N);  
Sūrya (N); Viṣṇu (N)
- होत्रक (hotraka) ▶ an assistant priest (V); a king (P)
- होत्रिय (hotriya) ▶ Agni (P)
- होम (homa) ▶ a Deva (P); a king (P); Viṣṇu (N)
- होमिन्/होमी (homin/homī) ▶ “one who performs a Homa”
- होम्य (homya) ▶ Śiva (N)
- हृद (hrada) ▶ a brother of Prahlāda (P)
- ह्राद (hrāda) ▶ a brother of Prahlāda (P)
- ह्रीधर (hrīdhara) ▶ Balarāma (N)
- ह्रीमय (hrīmaya) ▶ Kāla (N)
- ह्रीमान् (hrīmān) ▶ Śiva (N)
- ह्लाद (hlāda) ▶ a brother of Prahlāda (P)
- ह्लादन (hlādana) ▶ Śiva (N)





## **Part II**

# **Feminine Names**



## अ (a)

- अंशाख्या (aṃśākhyā) ▶ Hākinī (N)  
अंशिका (aṃśikā) ▶ feminine of अंशक  
अंशिनी (aṃśinī) ▶ Saṅkaṭā (N)  
अंशुका (aṃśukā) ▶ Yamunā (N)  
अंशुला (aṃśulā) ▶ feminine of अंशुल  
अःस्था (aḥsthā) ▶ Hākinī (N)  
अकर्त्री (akartrī) ▶ feminine of अकर्ता  
अकला (akalā) ▶ Pārvatī (N); Rādhā (N)  
अकल्पा (akalpā) ▶ Sītā (N)  
अकष्टा (akaṣṭā) ▶ Saṅkaṭā (N)  
अकान्ता (akāntā) ▶ Lalitā (N); Rādhā (N)  
अकामा (akāmā) ▶ Rādhā (N); Sītā (N); Yamunā (N)  
अकाम्या (akāmyā) ▶ Gomātā (N)  
अकाया (akāyā) ▶ Sītā (N)  
अकारा (akārā) ▶ Annapūrṇā (N); Bhavānī (N)  
अकार्या (akāryā) ▶ Lalitā (N); Pārvatī (N)  
अकाला (akālā) ▶ Rādhā (N)  
अकुण्ठा (akuṅṭhā) ▶ feminine of अकुण्ठ  
अकुला (akulā) ▶ Lalitā (N); Pārvatī (K)  
अकृता (akṛtā) ▶ feminine of अकृत  
अकृष्टा (akṛṣṭā) ▶ feminine of अकृष्ट  
अकोपा (akopā) ▶ Sītā (N)  
अक्ता (aktā) ▶ Sarasvatī (N)  
अक्रमा (akramā) ▶ feminine of अक्रम  
अक्रा (akrā) ▶ feminine of अक्र  
अक्रिया (akriyā) ▶ Yamunā (N)

हैमिनी (haiminī) ▶ name of a woman (P)

हैमी (haimī) ▶ Hākinī (N); Kālī (N); Pārvatī (N); Rādhikā (N);  
Sānkaṭā (N); Sītā (N)

होत्रा (hotrā) ▶ Gāyatrī (N)

होत्री (hotrī) ▶ Devasenā (N)

होमिनी (hominī) ▶ feminine of होमिन्/होमी

होम्या (homyā) ▶ feminine of होम्य

हृदा (hradā) ▶ a river (JP)

हृदिका (hradikā) ▶ a river (P)

ह्लादिनी (hrādinī) ▶ a river (P)

ह्री (hrī) ▶ a daughter of Dakṣa (P); a daughter of  
Svāyambhuva Manu (P); Gomātā (N); Lakṣmī (N)

ह्रीङ्गारी (hrīṅkāri) ▶ Annapūrṇā (N); Gāyatrī (N); Śyāmalā  
(N). ह्रीङ्गारबीजरूपा is Bhavānī (N).

ह्रीधरा (hrīdharā) ▶ feminine of ह्रीधर

ह्रीमती (hrīmatī) ▶ Gāyatrī (N); Lalitā (N); Śyāmalā (N)

ह्रीमयी (hrīmayī) ▶ feminine of ह्रीमय

ह्रीला (hrīlā) ▶ Rādhā (N)

ह्लादिनी (hlādinī) ▶ Kālī (N); Lakṣmī (N); Lalitā (N); Sītā (N);  
a river (K)



## Appendix A: Nakṣatra Syllables

There are some differences in the initial name syllables for the Nakṣatra Caraṇas in different Jyotiṣa works. Sometimes, one work has a long syllable for a Nakṣatra Caraṇa and another work has the corresponding short syllable. For example, the *Atibṛhadavakahaḍācakra* (Kanhaiyalal Vrajbhushandas Gupta, 1931) has the short vowel ‘a’ (अ) for the first Caraṇa of Kṛttikā, whereas the *Bṛhadavakahaḍācakra* (publisher unknown) has the long vowel ‘ā’ (आ) for the same Caraṇa. The following table is sourced from the *Bṛhadavakahaḍācakra* and is for reference only.

Nakṣatra	Caraṇa/Pāda			
	1	2	3	4
Aśvinī	cū (चू)	ce (चे)	co (चो)	lā (ला)
Bharaṇī	lī (ली)	lū (लू)	le (ले)	lo (लो)
Kṛttikā	ā (आ)	ī (ई)	ū (ऊ)	e (ए)
Rohiṇī	o (ओ)	vā (वा)	vī (वी)	vū (वू)
Mṛgaśiras	ve (वे)	vo (वो)	kā (का)	kī (की)
Ārdrā	kū (कू)	gha (घ)	ṛa (ङ)	cha (छ)
Punarvasu	ke (के)	ko (को)	hā (हा)	hī (ही)
Puṣya	hū (हू)	he (हे)	ho (हो)	ḍā (डा)
Āśleṣā	ḍī (डी)	ḍū (डू)	ḍe (डे)	ḍo (डो)

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Nakṣatra	Carāṇa/Pāda			
	1	2	3	4
Maghā	mā (मा)	mī (मी)	mū (मू)	me (मे)
Pūrvaphalgunī	mo (मो)	ṭā (टा)	ṭī (टी)	ṭū (टू)
Uttaraphalgunī	ṭe (टे)	ṭo (टो)	pā (पा)	pī (पी)
Hastā	pū (पू)	ṣa (ष)	ṇā (णा)	ṭhā (ठा)
Citrā	pe (पे)	po (पो)	rā (रा)	rī (री)
Svāti	rū (रू)	re (रे)	ro (रो)	tā (ता)
Viśākhā	tī (ती)	tū (तू)	te (ते)	to (तो)
Anurādhā	nā (ना)	nī (नी)	nū (नू)	ne (ने)
Jyeṣṭhā	no (नो)	yā (या)	yī (यी)	yū (यू)
Mūla	ye (ये)	yo (यो)	bhā (भा)	bhī (भी)
Pūrvāṣāḍhā	bhu (भु)	dhā (धा)	pha (फ)	ḍha (ढ)
Uttarāṣāḍhā	bhe (भे)	bho (भो)	jā (जा)	jī (जी)
Abhijit	jū (जू)	je (जे)	jo (जो)	ṣa (ष)
Śravaṇā	khī (खी)	khū (खू)	khe (खे)	kho (खो)
Dhaniṣṭhā	gā (गा)	gī (गी)	gū (गू)	ge (गे)
Śatabhiṣā	go (गो)	sā (सा)	sī (सी)	sū (सू)
Pūrvabhādrapadā	se (से)	so (सो)	dā (दा)	dī (दी)
Uttarabhādrapadā	dū (दू)	tha (थ)	jha (झ)	ña (ञ)
Revatī	de (दे)	do (दो)	cā (चा)	cī (ची)



## Appendix B: Rāśi Letters

The initial name consonants for Rāśis are usually not tied to any specific vowel (मात्रा) following the consonant. For example, any name beginning with ‘r’ or ‘t’, irrespective of the following vowel, is considered a Tulā Rāśi name. The following table is sourced from *Jyotiṣaphaladīpikā* (Diamond Pocket Books, 2005) and is for reference only.

Rāśi	Letters
Meṣa (मेष)	a l i (अ ल इ)
Vṛṣabha (वृषभ)	b v u (ब व उ)
Mithuna (मिथुन)	k ch gh kṣ (क छ घ क्ष)
Karka (कर्क)	h ḍ (ह ड)
Siṃha (सिंह)	m ṭ (म ट)
Kanyā (कन्या)	p ṭh ṇ (प ठ ण)
Tulā (तुला)	r t (र त)
Vṛ̥ścika (वृश्चिक)	n y (न य)
Dhanus (धनुस)	dh ph d bh (ध फ द भ)
Makara (मकर)	kh j (ख ज)
Kumbha (कुम्भ)	g ś ṣ s jñ (ग श ष स ज्ञ)
Mīna (मीन)	d c jh th (द च झ थ)





## Appendix C: Statistics

This book has exactly 10,000 names, with 5,000 masculine and 5,000 feminine names. The following table shows how the frequency distribution of names starting with each letter roughly corresponds to the frequency distribution of initial letters of words in the Monier-Williams' Sanskrit-English dictionary (1899). The digitised version of the dictionary used for this analysis is available from the website of Universität zu Köln and is dated 30 June 2014. The last column shows the number of names for both masculine and feminine genders, e.g., there are 447 masculine names and 447 feminine names beginning with the letter 'a' (अ) in this book.

Initial letter	Definitions in M-W	Percent definitions	Scaled by 5,000	M and F names
a (अ)	25,826	8.980%	449.0	447
ā (आ)	7,201	2.504%	125.2	125
i (इ)	1,393	0.484%	24.2	24
ī (ई)	347	0.121%	6.0	7
u (उ)	8,678	3.017%	150.9	150
ū (ऊ)	577	0.201%	10.0	11
r (ऋ)	788	0.274%	13.7	14
ṛ (ॠ)	14	0.005%	0.2	2
l (ऌ)	6	0.002%	0.1	2
ḷ (ॡ)	8	0.003%	0.1	2

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Initial letter	Definitions in M-W	Percent definitions	Scaled by 5,000	M and F names
e (ए)	1,321	0.459%	23.0	23
ai (ऐ)	315	0.110%	5.5	6
o (ओ)	247	0.086%	4.3	5
au (औ)	589	0.205%	10.2	11
k (क)	20,548	7.145%	357.2	356
kh (ख)	1,563	0.543%	27.2	27
g (ग)	7,551	2.625%	131.3	131
gh (घ)	1,101	0.383%	19.1	20
ṅ (ङ)	7	0.002%	0.1	2
c (च)	5,450	1.895%	94.7	94
ch (छ)	830	0.289%	14.4	15
j (ज)	5,086	1.768%	88.4	88
jh (झ)	214	0.074%	3.7	4
ñ (ञ)	7	0.002%	0.1	2
ṭ (ट)	168	0.058%	2.9	3
ṭh (ठ)	24	0.008%	0.4	2
ḍ (ड)	187	0.065%	3.3	4
ḍh (ढ)	52	0.018%	0.9	2
ṇ (ण)	12	0.004%	0.2	2
t (त)	8,190	2.848%	142.4	142
th (थ)	31	0.011%	0.5	2
d (द)	10,910	3.793%	189.7	188
dh (ध)	3,599	1.251%	62.6	62
n (न)	11,784	4.097%	204.9	203
p (प)	31,116	10.819%	541.0	539
ph (फ)	765	0.266%	13.3	14
b (ब)	5,635	1.959%	98.0	97
bh (भ)	6,779	2.357%	117.9	117
m (म)	16,253	5.651%	282.6	281

## Statistics

<b>Initial letter</b>	<b>Definitions in M-W</b>	<b>Percent definitions</b>	<b>Scaled by 5,000</b>	<b>M and F names</b>
y (य)	4,472	1.555%	77.7	77
r (र)	7,757	2.697%	134.9	134
l (ल)	3,990	1.387%	69.4	69
v (व)	28,507	9.912%	495.6	494
ś (श)	14,697	5.110%	255.5	254
ṣ (ष)	831	0.289%	14.4	15
s (स)	36,972	12.855%	642.8	641
h (ह)	5,206	1.810%	90.5	90
<b>Total</b>	<b>287,604</b>	<b>100.000%</b>	<b>5,000</b>	<b>5,000</b>







The ocean of Sanskrit names is unfathomable. Hundreds of thousands of Sanskrit names are attested in Sanātana, Bauddha and Jaina texts. *Sunāma-Sarit* (“the river of good names”) is an authentic collection of 10,000 short (one-, two-, or three-syllable) Sanskrit names chosen from the author’s curated collection of more than 200,000 names from around 150 Sanskrit texts. In an age where the Internet is full of misinformation on Sanskrit names, this book is a ready reference for parents or entrepreneurs seeking a short Sanskrit name for their child or business.



Nityānanda Miśra, an alumnus of IIM Bangalore, is an investment banker, author of ten books, and an onomastician based in Mumbai. He has offered more than 1,200 consultations on Sanskrit names to parents and entrepreneurs over four years. This is his second book on Sanskrit names; the first being ‘Sunāma: Beautiful Sanskrit Names’ (2020).



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