

## ANNA SQUARE

*Roman Pyrih, Seoul*

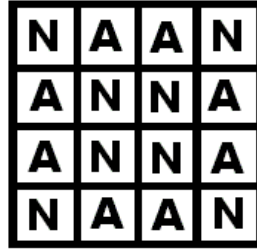
Sanskrit is renowned for its complexity, fineness and capacity to communicate subtle philosophical ideas. Less explored are its palindromic connections. Palindrome enthusiasts are probably aware of the marvel of Śísupālavadhā created by Magha, which displays a number of remarkable reverse verses and other forms of constrained writing and word play. Stanza 27 features famous 32-syllables ‘perfect in all directions’ *sarvatobhadra* verse – one of the most exquisite palindromes ever written.

Apart from that, awareness about experimentations in the oldest Indo-European language is rather limited. But let’s not overlook the pleasure and inspiration that can be derived from Sanskrit for recreational linguistics, as exquisiteness of methods used by Indian poets in many cases surpassed the scope of present-day logology. For example, unique in the history of literature is phenomenon of *shlesha* – bitextual poetry with different layers of meanings injected in one text.

Among the vast variety of Sanskrit poetic forms was also ingenious art of *chitrakavya*, combining visual poetry and word play. It included *vilomakavya* – syllabic palindromes and bidirectional verses. Remarkably, palindromes constructed by Indian poets were not only skillful, but also meaningful. Daivajna Suryadasa Kavi wrote famous Rāmakṛṣṇavilomakāvya – religious invocations for Rama, which read in reverse turn into Krishna’s praise.

Much more will be revealed to an inquisitive reader eager to venture into the realm of Sanskrit word play. As this paper is not intended to be a historical research, the abovesaid was mentioned for merely introductory purpose.

Below the author attempts to built Latin word squares, while using Sanskrit words. Avoiding Devanagari is dictated by the nature of experiment and is not meant to debase the visual beauty of the script.

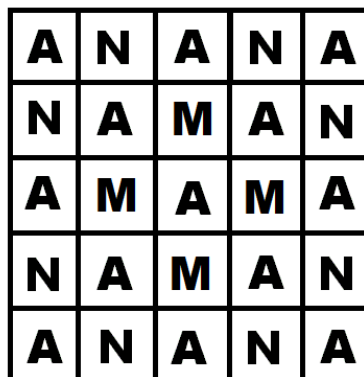


1. The first square displays combination of words *anna* (food, cereal, rice) and *naan* (oven-baked flatbread – Hindi word derived from Persian *nān*).

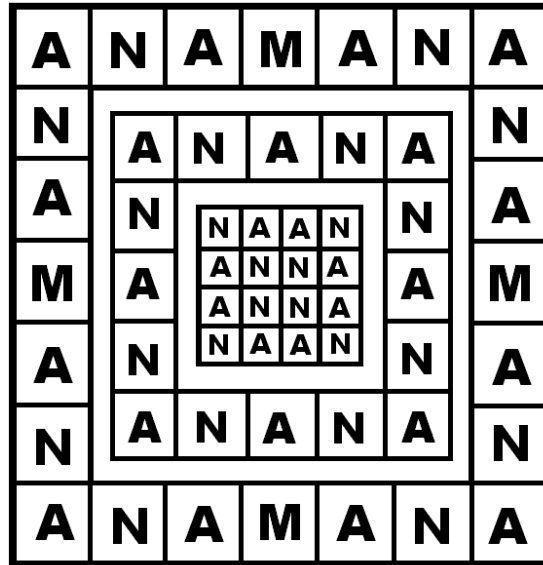
The square features balanced visual play between A and N letters, semantically denoting transformation of grain into bread or representing generalized food in opposition to its specific form. A's shape can be compared with a seed, whereas N looks like splitting or braking something. A is traditionally the beginning of language and the first phoneme in initial sacred sound AUM.

It is worth mentioning that food has important connotations in Indian philosophy. In Upanishads food is generalized as sustaining substance or nurturing object. Taittiriya Upanishad exclaims 'I'm food (*aham annam*), I'm food, I'm food! I'm the eater of food, I'm the eater of food, I'm the eater of food! I'm the poet, who joins the two together, I'm the poet, I'm the poet'!

Food becomes sacred after sacrificial offering, spiritualized by divine touch.

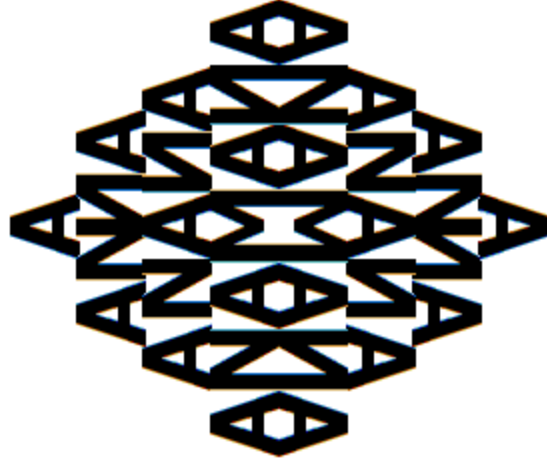


2. A new letter ‘M’ is introduced to the word square, while fortifying its visual symmetry. *Anana* means breathing, living, and further elaborates on idea of food as life sustaining agent. *Ānana* (with capital long [a:]) can also mean mouth or door, a nice match either. *Nāman* is name, essence, form or substance, while *amama* – devoid of attachment, egotism, indifferent. Combined meaning is quite vague, but we can suggest that the square hints at altruism as a real name behind living (nourished by food).



3. Finally to bring things together the word *ānāmana* – conciliation, propitiation – is introduced. We still have same 3 letters with original anna square in the middle, and enveloping anana and anamana lines, their letters almost erupting from the center, at the same time being contained by plain circular motion of the picture.

We can also put the palindrome into different visual shape, featuring some mouth opening and eye stretching (eye is *nayana* नयन in Sanskrit). See the next page.



As the final remark, the author would like to share his view that sustainable palindromic practice, apart from mastering a mother tongue, requires reinforcement with interdisciplinary and interlinguistic links. High palindrome is both poetic and intellectual deed that feeds on meanings and senses.

Otherwise, how on Earth would one know that DEITY TIED might have a very concrete definition? It is Damodar – another name of mischievous Krishna, who was tied with rope by his mother Yasoda.

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