



LEVEL - 1 GUIDE FOR PURE PRONUNCIATION OF ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ

RULES FOR ‘SHORT’ (HRASVA) AND ‘LONG’ (DĪRGHA) SOUNDS -

- Syllables made of the short vowels **a, i, u, ṛ, ṝ** are ‘short’ (time: 1 beat).
- Syllables made of the long vowels **ā, ī, ū, ṝ, ṝ̄, e, ai, o, au** are ‘prolonged’ (time: 2 beats).

RULES FOR PRONUNCIATION OF ĀNUSVĀRA -

- **Ānusvāra (ṁ)** - Translated literally, Ānusvāra means ‘following (anu) the vowel (svara).’ It is pronounced as a nasal sound. Please observe the difference between the representation of an ānusvāra as ‘**ṁ**’ (m with an underdot) and the consonant **m** (‘m’ without any diacritical mark).
- **Anunāsikas** - Anunāsikas are the ‘nasal consonants.’ They are pronounced through the mouth and nose.

CONSONANTS -

The consonants in Sanskrit are divided into several groups (called ‘vargas’) according to their mouth positions (please refer to the diagram on the last page). Each group is identified by the starting letter of that particular group. To correctly pronounce the ānusvāra, we must look at the anunāsika (the fifth consonant) of the group to which the following consonant belongs.

‘KA’ (क) GROUP

- **k, kh, g, gh, ṅ** are **gutturals** as they are produced in the throat.
- The **anunāsika** for this group is **ṅ**. Hence, pronounce the ānusvāra preceding the letters of this group as ‘**ṅ**.’ For e.g., **kaṁkaṇa** (kaṅkaṇa), **paṁkha** (paṅkha), **gaṁgā** (gaṅgā), **saṁgha** (saṅgha)
- ‘**kṣa**’ is a **conjunct consonant** (k+ṣa) in which the first letter is ‘**k**.’ Hence, the ānusvāra preceding the letter ‘**kṣa**’ will be pronounced as ‘**ṅ**.’ For e.g., **saṁkṣipta** (saṅkṣipta)

‘CA’ (च) GROUP

- **c, ch, j, jh, ñ** are **palatals** as they are produced in the **palate**.
- The **anunāsika** for this group is ‘**ñ**.’ Hence, pronounce the **ānusvāra** preceding the letters of this category as ‘**ñ**.’ For e.g., **caṃcala** (**cañcala**), **paṃchī** (**pañchī**), **paṃjā** (**pañjā**), **rāṃjhā** (**rāñjhā**)
- ‘**jñ**’ is a **conjunct consonant** (**j+ñ= jñ**), in which the first letter is ‘**j**.’ Hence, the **ānusvāra** preceding the letter ‘**jñ**’ will be pronounced as ‘**ñ**.’ For e.g., **idaṃjñānam** (**idañjñānam**)

‘ṬA’ (ट) GROUP

- **ṭ, ṭh, ḍ, ḍh, ṇ** are **cerebrals or retroflexes**. These are produced in the **roof** of the mouth when the tip of the tongue curls slightly backwards and touches the hard palate.
- The **anunāsika** for this category is ‘**ṇ**.’ Hence, pronounce the **ānusvāra** preceding the letters of this category as ‘**ṇ**.’ For e.g., **ghaṃṭā** (**ghaṇṭā**), **kaṃṭha** (**kaṇṭha**), **paṃḍita** (**paṇḍita**), **ṣaṃḍha** (**ṣaṇḍha**)

‘TA’ (त) GROUP

- **t, th, d, dh, n** are **dentals** as they are produced using the **teeth**.
- The **anunāsika** for this category is ‘**n**.’ Hence, pronounce the **ānusvāra** preceding the letters of this category as ‘**n**.’ For e.g., **paṃta** (**panta**), **paṃtha** (**pantha**), **kaṃda** (**kanda**), **aṃdha** (**andha**)
- ‘**tra**’ is a **conjunct consonant** (**t+ra**), in which the first letter is ‘**t**.’ Hence, the **ānusvāra** preceding the letter ‘**tra**’ will be pronounced as ‘**n**.’ For e.g., **taṃtra** (**tantra**)

‘PA’ (प) GROUP

- **p, ph, b, bh, m** are **labials** as they are produced by the **lips**.
- The **anunāsika** letter for this category is ‘**m**.’ Hence, pronounce the **ānusvāra** preceding the letters of this category as ‘**m**.’ For e.g., **caṃpā** (**campā**), **iṃphāla** (**imphāla**), **saṃbala** (**sambala**), **daṃbha** (**dambha**)

SPECIAL GROUP -

The letters **y, l, v** could also be nasal, or **anunāsikas**. When the **ānusvāra** is followed by any letter from **‘ya’** to **‘ha,’** it is pronounced in a certain way. With a view to explain the correct pronunciation, the nasalised letters are written within brackets in the examples given below. Please note, these nasalised letters (**ya, la, va**) are never mentioned in the original text. They are provided here only to help the beginners achieve clarity and ease in pronunciation.

ANUSVĀRA PRECEDING CONSONANTS ‘YA’ TO ‘HA’ WITHIN A WORD -

When an **ānusvāra** occurs within a word and is followed by any letter from **‘ya’** to **‘ha,’** it’s pronunciation is a **nasalised** form of **‘y,’ ‘l’** or **‘v.’**

- **y** - saṃyama [saṃ(y)yama], saṃyogitā [saṃ(y)yogitā], saṃyukta [saṃ(y)yukta]
- **l** - saṃlagna [saṃ(l)lagna], saṃlāpa [saṃ(l)lāpa]
- **v** - saṃvāda (saṃ(v)vāda), saṃvardhana (saṃ(v)vardhana), saṃvedanā (saṃ(v)vedanā)
- **r** - saṃracanā [saṃ(r)racanā], saṃrakṣaṇa [saṃ(r)rakṣaṇa], saṃrekhaṇa [saṃ(r)rekhaṇa]
- **ś/ṣ** - saṃśaya [saṃ(ś)śaya], vaṃśa [vaṃ(ś)śa], daṃśa [daṃ(ś)śa], saṃśraya [saṃ(ś)śraya]
- **s** - kaṃsa [kaṃ(s)sa], saṃsāra [saṃ(s)sāra], saṃsarga [saṃ(s)sarga]
- **h** - saṃha [saṃ(h)ha], saṃhāra [saṃ(h)hāra], saṃhitā [saṃ(h)hitā]

ANUSVĀRA FOLLOWED BY CONSONANTS ‘YA’ TO ‘HA’ AT THE END OF THE WORD -

When the **ānusvāra** occurring at the end of a word is followed by a word beginning with any of the letters from **‘ya’** to **‘ha,’** it is always pronounced.

- **y** - dharmyāmṛtamidaṃ(y) yathoktam
- **r** - lokamimaṃ(m) ravihi
- **l** – tadottamavidāṃ(l) lokān
- **v** - dhyānaṃ(v) viśiṣyate
- **ś/ṣ** - idaṃ(m) śarīram
- **s** - evaṃ(m) satata
- **h** - kṣayaṃ(m) himsām

RULES FOR PRONUNCIATION OF VISARGA (ḥ) -

A 'visarga' follows a vowel. Translated literally, it means 'to release.' Although it is generally pronounced like a 'ha,' the pronunciation of the visarga is **not a fixed sound**. It depends on the syllable following it as well as the syllable preceding it.

RULE 1- FOR PRONUNCIATION OF VISARGA AT THE END OF THE LINE -

If the visarga occurs at the end of the last word in a line, then it echoes the previous vowel's pronunciation.

Visarga pronunciation according to the preceding vowel -

- If the vowel preceding it is 'a,' then the visarga is pronounced as 'h/hā.' For e.g., saṃśayaḥ = saṃśayaḥ/saṃśayaḥa
- If the vowel preceding it is 'ā,' then the visarga is pronounced as 'hā.' For e.g., ratāḥ = ratāḥa
- If the vowel preceding it is 'i,' 'ī,' or 'ai,' then the visarga is pronounced as 'hi.' For e.g., matiḥ=matihi, dharmaiḥ=dharmaihi
- If the vowel preceding it is 'u,' 'ū,' or 'au,' then the visarga will be pronounced is 'hu.' For e.g., kuruḥ = kuruḥu
- If the vowel preceding it is 'e,' then the visarga is pronounced as 'he.' For e.g., bhūmeḥ = bhūmehe
- If the vowel preceding it is 'o,' then the visarga is pronounced as 'ho.' For e.g., mānāpamānayaḥ = mānāpamānayaḥo

RULE 2- PRONUNCIATION OF VISARGA WHEN IT OCCURS BETWEEN TWO WORDS -

If there is a word after the visarga, then it's pronunciation depends on the first letter of the following word.

- If the next word begins with a 'k' or a 'kh' after the visarga, then the visarga should be pronounced somewhat like a 'kh.' For e.g., maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca = maitraḥ (kh) karuṇa eva ca
- If there is a 'p' or a 'ph,' after the visarga, then it should be pronounced somewhat like a 'ph.' For e.g., tataḥ padaṃ tatparimārgitavyam = tataḥ (ph) padaṃ tatparimārgitavyam
- **Note:** The visarga does not really change the 'pa' into a 'pha' or a 'ka' into a 'kha.' It is simply that wherever the visarga is placed, you make a half-aspirating sound keeping your mouth ready to say the following 'pa' or 'ka.'
- If there is an 's,' 'ś' or 'ṣ' after the visarga, then it should be pronounced as 's,' 'ś' and 'ṣ' respectively. For e.g., santuṣṭaḥ satatam = santuṣṭaṣsatatam

yo madbhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ = yo madbhaktassa me priyaḥ

ūrdhvamūlamadhaḥ śākhā = ūrdhvamūlamadhaśśākhā

manaḥ ṣaṣṭhānīndriyāṇi = manaṣṣaṣṭhānīndriyāṇi

Special Case: If there is a 'kṣa' after the visarga, then it is pronounced as 'ha,' 'hi,' 'hu,' or 'he' in accordance with Rule 1. For e.g., tejaḥ kṣamā = tejaha kṣamā

VISARGA SANDHI -

In Śrīmadbhagavadgītā, at several places, the visarga is converted into an **r**, **s**, **ś**, or **ṣ**. This conversion is based on the principles of 'Sandhi' in Sanskrit.

For e.g., **buddhiḥ yo = buddhiryo**, **parayopetāḥ te = parayopetāste**, **vedaiḥ ca = vedaiśca**

The theory and principles of Sandhi are a bit complex, so they'll be discussed in more detail in advanced levels. For now, we advise you to simply read and learn the pronunciations the way they are indicated in the PDFs.

AVAGRAHA (S) (') -

Avagraha, denoted by an **apostrophe** sign, is placed between two parts of a word and it simply indicates that the letter '**a**' had once been in that position. It has no pronunciation of its own.

For e.g., **kleśo'dhikatarasteṣāma**, **abhyāse'pyasamartho'si**, **bhaktāste'tīva**

RULES FOR 'ĀGHĀTA' (STRESSED PRONUNCIATION) -

- At the occurrence of a **conjunct consonant** (a joined letter made up of a combination of two or more consonants), **stress** should be placed on the **first** consonant by reading the first consonant twice. Examples of conjunct consonants: **kṣa**(k+ṣa), **tra**(t+ra), **jña**(j+ña), **tya**(t+ya), **vya**(v+ya), **pra**(p+ra).
Examples of āghāta: **mavyaktam = mav + vyak + ktam**, **me priyaḥ = mep + priyaḥ**
- Please note **if a consonant is combined with a vowel**, then it is **not considered** a conjunct consonant. Hence, there is **no stress in pronunciation**. For e.g., In the word '**visṛjamyaham**,' '**ṣṛ**' is **not a conjunct consonant** (as it is made up of a consonant and a vowel 's' + 'ṛ'). Therefore, there will be no emphasis on the '**vi**' preceding the '**ṣṛ**.' Stress is given only on letters preceding conjunct consonants.
- Āghāta is also not given on an ānusvāra, visarga, or consonants. For e.g., In '**Vāsudevam(ṽ)** Vrajapriyam,' even though '**vra**' is a conjunct consonant, there will be no stress on the letter before it because of the presence of the ānusvāra.
- In your PDFs, **Āghāta** is indicated by '||' on the letters that need to be stressed.

There are some exceptions to Stress - Āghāta Rules

- Stress is not given if - the same consonant occurs twice, example - on 'ma' in '**mayyāveśya**' – 'ya' repeated twice, on 'u' in '**uttiṣṭha**' – 'ta' repeated twice.
- The joined letter is made up of 3 letters, example - on the 'bha' in '**bhaktyā**', where the three consonants are 'ka', 'ta' and 'ya'
- There is a presence of 'Ra' – 'Rafaar' (half Ra) or 'Ha' – 'Hakaar' (half Ha) sounds, example - on 'sa' in '**sarvatra**', or 'gu' in '**guhya**'

MOUTH POSITIONS OF THE CONSONANTS -

In Sanskrit, the alphabets are ordered and grouped scientifically based on the place and manner of their articulation as shown in the diagram below. A study of these sounds with their specific mouth positions can help us achieve greater clarity and accuracy in pronunciation. The unique scientific basis, precision and profundity of Sanskrit are also evident in this diagram.



|| Iti ||

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