



LEVEL - 2 GUIDE FOR

PURE PRONUNCIATION OF ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ

The various Alphabets and their pronunciation rules-

- The Sanskrit language defines clearly the pronunciation rules related to the various alphabets. To pronounce any alphabet the various parts within the mouth are utilised. For example, throat, palate (both soft and hard) etc. The alphabets are categorized and named on the basis of the place from where they are pronounced, like the alphabets in the group of ‘क’ that use the throat to pronounce are termed as “Guttural”. The entire alphabet list along with the categorization depicting the place from where they are pronounced is shared in a diagram below.

- The letters ‘S’, ‘Ś’, and ‘Ṣ’ are respectively known as ‘Dental’, ‘Palatal’ and ‘Cerebral’. These three get pronounced in the same way as the other alphabets of the respective group.

Kindly note that the pronunciation of the respective alphabets done using the right place as shown in the diagram is the best way to pronounce it.

- Akuhavisarjanīyānām Kaṇṭhaḥ
Gutturals – ‘A’, ‘Ā’, ‘K’ group, ‘H’, Visarga (:)
- Icūyaśānām Tālu
Palatals – ‘I’, ‘Ī’, ‘C’ Group, ‘Y’, ‘Ś’
- R̥turaśānām Mūrdhā
Cerebrals – ‘R’, ‘Ṛ’, ‘Ṭ’ Group, ‘R’, ‘Ṣ’
- Ṭtulasānām Dantāḥ:
Dentals – ‘L’, ‘Ṭ’ Group, ‘L’, ‘S’
- Upūpadhmānīyānāmoṣṭhau
Labials – ‘U’, ‘Ū’, ‘P’ Group, Upadhmāniya ‘P’*, ‘PH’*
- Aidetoḥ Kaṇṭhatālu
Guttural-Palatals – ‘E’, ‘AI’
- Odautoḥ Kaṇṭhoṣṭham
Guttural-Labials – ‘O’, ‘AU’
- Ōamaṇaṇanānām Nāsikā Ca
Oral-nasals – ‘N’, ‘Ṇ’, ‘Ṇ’, ‘N’, ‘M’
- Vakārasya Dantoṣṭham
Dental-Labials – ‘V’
- Jihvāmūliyasya Jihvāmūlam
Base of the tongue ‘K’*, ‘KH’*
- Nāsikānuswārasya
Nasals – Anuswāra (◌ं)



Avagraha –

- Avagraha ‘s’ represents the vowel (swara) ‘A’, that has blended into another swara as per the rules of collaboration (sandhi). It does not have any independent pronunciation. Avagraha always follows/succeeds ‘e’, ‘o’ or ‘aa’.

Meters (Chhandas) used in ŚrīmadBhagavadgītā

- In the Sanskrit language there are multiple meters used, however in ŚrīmadBhagavadgītā there are only two meters that have been used 1) Anuṣṭup 2) Triṣṭup. In Anuṣṭup there are total of 32 alphabets used, by further dividing them into 4 quarters of 8 alphabets each. In Triṣṭup there are total of 44 alphabets used, by dividing them into 4 quarters of 11 alphabets each. The practice of taking a pause after 8 and 11 alphabets is termed as ‘Yati’ in the Science of Chhandas
Kindly note that exceptions are found only in a few verses like (11/1, 2/6, 2/29, 8/10, 15/3), wherein there is one syllable is more or one is less.

Rules for pronouncing the words starting with consonant ‘S’

- Any word starting with consonant ‘S’ which is devoid of a swara as it is used only half, then there is a common practice of pre-fixing a swara prior to it for ease of pronunciation, like (sthāna) becomes isthāna which is incorrect usage.

Use of stress on certain alphabets (Āghāta)

- It is a common practice to combine two consonants such as ‘d’ and ‘ya’ to form ‘dya’, ‘dh’ and ‘ya’ these three consonants to form ‘dhya’. The first example has two consonants and the second one has three. Both above examples qualify for the rule of joint consonants.
- The stress or Āghāta can be shown by pronouncing the first consonant of the combined consonants as double. In this process of doubling if the alphabet that is being doubled is the second one in the group, then it gets transformed into the first alphabet of that group for the first part of the doubling followed by the second alphabet as it is. Similarly, if it is the fourth one, then it gets transformed into the third one of that group, for the first part of the doubling followed by the fourth alphabet as it is. However, if the alphabet is the first or the third in the group, then the same alphabet gets doubled. Examples –
 - ‘Akṣara’ = A k ṣara > A k kṣara = ‘Akṣara’
 - ‘Vyākhyā’ = Vyā kh yā > Vyā kh kh yā > Vyā k kh yā = ‘Vyākhyā’
 - ‘Viddhi’ = Vi d dhi > Vi d d dhi = ‘Viddhi’
 - ‘Yudhyati’ = Yu dh yati > Yu dh dh yati > Yu d dh yati = ‘Yuddhyati’
- Exceptions: In some cases, the above explained rules do not apply like if the same consonant is present in the combined consonant, or three consonants are combined together or if in the combined consonants the first consonant is a half ‘r’ or half ‘h’, then the stress or Āghāta will not be indicated and it should be pronounced that way.

Kindly note that besides the first four alphabets, where the first alphabet or any special alphabet is used as the first consonant in the joint consonants then the first consonant only will be doubled for pronunciation.

Rules of Collaboration (Sandhi)

When two specific alphabets come together it is called collaboration (Sandhi). If the alphabets collaborating are vowels then it is called the Vowel collaboration (Swara Sandhi), if the alphabets collaborating are consonants (vyañjanas) then it is called the Consonant collaboration (Vyañjana Sandhi), if there is a change in the anuswāra due to the collaboration then it is called the Anuswāra Sandhi, and if there is a change in the collaboration due to a visarga then it is called the Visarga Sandhi. Due to the specific collaborations, there can be a transformation in one or both collaborating elements. Let us now see the various collaborations and the transformations that happen due to their coming together.

Visarga Collaboration (Sandhi)

Visarga Sandhi is dependent on the alphabets preceding or succeeding the visarga. In fact, the preceding and the succeeding alphabets only play an important role in the transformation that take place in the visarga pronunciation due to the collaboration.

1. If the Visarga is preceded by vowel 'a', and followed again either by vowel 'a', or any soft consonant ('G', 'Gh', 'J', 'Jh', 'D', 'Dh', 'D', 'Dh', 'B', 'Bh', 'Y', 'R', 'L', 'V', 'H' or any 5th alphabet of the group namely anunāsiks) then the visarga will change into vowel 'o'.

Kindly note that after the visarga changes into 'o' then the succeeding 'a' is converted to an avagraha denoted by (ᳵ). It means the 'a' pronunciation is omitted completely and the avagraha is used in its place to elongate the 'o' swara.

Preceding Alphabet	Visarga	Succeeding Alphabet	Changed form of the Visarga	Example
'a'	ḥ	'a' / Soft Consonant	'o' / 'o ᳵ'	Darpaḥ + Abhimānaśca = Darpoᳵbhimānaśca(16/4) Cetsudurācāraḥ + Bhajate = Cetsudurācāroᳵbhajate(9/30)

2. If the visarga is preceded by vowel 'a' and followed by any vowel other than 'a' then the visarga ceases to exist.

#However this rule is not applicable for indeclinable words. Please see the Rule number 5 for this.

Preceding Alphabet	Visarga	Succeeding Alphabet	Changed form of the Visarga	Example
'a'	ḥ	Any vowel other than 'a'	Ceases to exist	Manahḥ + Ādhatsva = Mana Ādhatsva(12/8)

3. If the visarga is preceded by vowel 'ā' and followed by any other vowel or soft consonant then the visarga ceases to exist. (In some conventions if visarga that has ceased to exist is at the end of the quarter (yati) then it is pronounced.)

Kindly note that after following the 2 rules as explained above, where the visarga ceases to exist, there will not be any collaboration between the remaining vowels if any.

Preceding Alphabet	Visarga	Succeeding Alphabet	Changed form of the Visarga	Example
'ā'	ḥ	Any vowel / Soft Consonant	Ceases to exist	Māyāpahr̥tajñānāḥ + Āsuram = Māyāpahr̥tajñānā Āsuram(7/15)

4. If visarga is preceded by any vowel other than 'a' or 'ā' and followed by **any other vowel** or **soft consonant** then the visarga changes into half 'r'. If the 'r' is followed by a vowel then that vowel merges in 'r' and if it is followed by soft consonant too it merges, and gets denoted with a sign on the top of that consonant.

Preceding Alphabet	Visarga	Succeeding Alphabet	Changed form of the Visarga	Example
Any swara other than 'a', 'ā'	ḥ	Any vowel /Soft Consonant	'r'	Duḥ + Nirīkṣyam = Durnirīkṣyam(11/17)

5. If the visarga can be categorised as an **indeclinable visarga**, and it is preceded by **any vowel** and followed by **any vowel** or **soft consonant** except 'r', then the visarga changes to 'r'.

Preceding Alphabet	Visarga	Succeeding Alphabet	Changed form of the Visarga	Example
Any indeclinable vowel	ḥ	Any vowel / Soft Consonant	'r'	Punaḥ + Janma= Punarjanma(8/16)

6. If the visarga is preceded by **any vowel** and followed by 'c' or 'ch', then the visarga changes to 'ś', further if the visarga is followed by 'ṭ' or 'ṭh' then it changes to 'ṣ' and if visarga is followed by 't' or 'th' then it changes to 's'.

Preceding Alphabet	Visarga	Succeeding Alphabet	Changed form of the Visarga	Example
Any vowel	ḥ	'c' / 'ch'	'ś'	Yoginaḥ + Cainam= Yoginaścainam(15/11)
		'ṭ' / 'ṭh'	'ṣ'	Dhanuḥ + Taṅkāra= Dhanuṣṭaṅkāra
		't' / 'th'	's'	Hanyuḥ + Tanme= Hanyustanme (1/46)

7. If the visarga is preceded by any vowel and followed by 'k' or 'kh', then the visarga pronunciation will sound like 'kh', but it will not be actually 'kh'.

Kindly remember it should only sound like 'kh', and not say the actual 'kh'.

Preceding Alphabet	Visarga	Succeeding Alphabet	Changed form of the Visarga	Example
Any vowel	ḥ	'k' or 'kh'	sound like 'kh'	Maitraḥ + Karuṇa= Maitraḥ(kh) karuṇa(12/13)

8. If the visarga is preceded by **any vowel** and followed by 'p' or 'ph', then the visarga pronunciation will sound like 'ph', but it will not be actually 'ph'.

Kindly remember it should only sound like 'ph', and not say the actual 'ph'.

Preceding Alphabet	Visarga	Succeeding Alphabet	Changed form of the Visarga	Example
Any vowel	ḥ	'p' or 'ph'	Only sound like 'ph'	Tataḥ+Padam= Tataḥ(ph) padam(15/4)

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