

Jai Shankar !

With the Blessings of Parama Pūjya Swāmījī, a training program has been planned as part of the Sāyujyam Sāmūhika Sādhanā initiative, to teach correct pronunciation of stotra-s and shloka-s that are regularly chanted at the Math.

This document has been prepared as a guide to उच्चारण rules of Sanskrit by taking examples from the stotra-s recited by sādhaika-s daily. The topics covered herein are –

### Section 1

- I. Pronouncing consonants followed by a vowel
- II. Writing the अनुस्वार and अनुनासिक व्यञ्जन
- III. Pronouncing the अनुनासिक
- IV. Pronouncing the अनुस्वार
- V. Pronouncing the विसर्ग
- VI. ह्रस्व and दीर्घ
- VII. अल्पप्राण and महाप्राण
- VIII. संयुक्त-वर्ण-s Conjunct consonants
- IX. Impact or आघात on syllable preceding a conjunct

### Section 2

वर्णविचारः - Vowels and Consonants, Classification and places of articulation

In any language, one is bound to notice variations and regional differences in pronunciation. With the aim of bringing uniformity while chanting stotra-s during our Math programs, this guide has been prepared with guidance from experts and by taking into account the rules and manner of articulation that are most widely accepted.

This guide attempts to explain the rules in a very simple manner to help those who have not formally learnt the Sanskrit language. However, the most reliable way to get the pronunciations right is to listen and learn directly from a trainer who is well-versed in this subject.

In addition to following these स्तोत्रोच्चारण rules, sādhaika-s are encouraged to also practice Ninād and breathing techniques to make their chanting effective. Using a Tānpurā drone to maintain a pitch /scale will make the recitation even more impressive.

**Section 1****I. Pronouncing consonants followed by a vowel**

Reading Sanskrit is different from reading Hindi or Marāthī in the Devanāgarī script. As one reads हम in Hindi, often the Sanskrit word मम is incorrectly pronounced as मम्. In Sanskrit, म = म् + अ (consonant + vowel). When the consonant is followed by a vowel, the vowel must be distinctly heard. While saying मम, which is म् + अ + म् + अ, after the lips close to say the second consonant म् they should part to pronounce the second vowel अ. However, in the word वयम् the lips remain closed after sounding the म्. The हलन्त sign ँ denotes a consonant that is not followed by a vowel. (Click here to learn about vowels and consonants in Section 2.)

**II. Writing the अनुस्वार and अनुनासिक व्यञ्जन**

1. A word is written with the म् at the end when it is written independently or when it is the last word in a sentence or verse e.g. स्तोत्रम्
2. When followed by any consonant it is written as अनुस्वार e.g. स्तोत्रं पठेत्
3. Within a word the अनुस्वार when followed by a वर्गीय-व्यञ्जन is written as the अनुनासिक of its respective वर्ग. (Click here to learn about वर्गीय-व्यञ्जन-s in Section 2.)
4. This method of writing is not followed in other languages like Hindi or Marathi. Note the use of वर्गीय-अनुनासिक-s in Sanskrit.

क वर्ग	शङ्करः = शङ् + करः ; गङ्गा = गङ् + गा
च वर्ग	पञ्चमः = पञ् + चमः ; रञ्जते = रञ् + जते
ट वर्ग	कण्ठः = कण् + ठः ; दण्डः = दण् + डः
त वर्ग	आनन्दः = आनन् + दः ; वन्दे = वन् + दे
प वर्ग	परम्परा = परम् + परा ; शाम्भवी = शाम् + भवी

5. The अनुस्वार within a word is written as a dot when it is followed by अवर्गीय-व्यञ्जन-s य्, र्, ल्, व्, श्, ष्, स्, ह् e.g. संयमः, संलग्नम्, संवित्, संरक्षणम्, अंशः, दंष्ट्रः, संस्कृतम्, सिंहः (Click here to learn about अवर्गीय-व्यञ्जन-s in Section 2.)

**III. Pronouncing the अनुनासिक**

शंकर is pronounced as शङ्कर and not शम्कर. By paying attention to the pronunciation of the words, one will understand why the method of writing the respective अनुनासिक in Sanskrit is logical. The अनुनासिक and the next consonant belong to the same वर्ग and their स्थान i.e. place of articulation is the same. (Click to learn about स्थान in Section 2.)

We extend the same logic to words in a sentence or a verse that end in अनुस्वार and are followed by a वर्गीय-व्यञ्जन. That makes speaking or recitation easier too.

Printed as	Pronounced as	Not as
आलयं करुणालयम्	आलयङ् करुणालयम्	आलयम् करुणालयम्
सहवीर्यं करवावहै	सहवीर्यङ् करवावहै	सहवीर्यम् करवावहै
योगिनीनां चतुःषष्टिः	योगिनीनाञ् चतुःषष्टिः	योगिनीनाम् चतुःषष्टिः
शाम्भवं तु	शाम्भवन् तु	शाम्भवम् तु

**IV. Pronouncing the अनुस्वार**

1. The अनुस्वार is a resonating nasal sound.
2. The व्यञ्जन-s य्, ल् and व् have nasal counterparts which have specific pronunciation depending on the letter that follows. These used to be written separately in earlier times. e.g. सयँयम, सवँवत्सर, सलँलाप  
Such words are written as संयम, संवत्सर, संलाप in present times. The tongue is in the position of य्, व् and ल् respectively when the nasal sound is heard.
3. When followed by र्, श्, ष्, स्, ह् the अनुस्वार is pronounced as a pure resonating nasal sound. These consonants do not have nasal counterparts.  
e.g. संरक्षण, संशय, दंष्ट्र, संस्कृत, संहार
4. While making a pure nasal sound, the air flows out only through the nose, the tongue is in neutral i.e. resting position. The jaws close to stop the passage of air from the mouth. The lips do not close completely but come closer because of the jaws coming close.
5. In such words it is important to note that अनुस्वार should not be pronounced like the न् (tongue touching top of teeth) or म् (lips closing completely).

Here is a quick reference showing the difference between अनुस्वार, मकार, नकार -

	Jaws close	Lips close	Air is expelled
अनुस्वार	Yes	Coincidental since jaws close	Only through the nose
मकार	No	Yes	Through the mouth and nose
नकार	No	No	Through the mouth and nose

6. The same rule can be applied when a word in a sentence or a verse ends in अनुस्वार and next word begin with one of the अवर्गीय-व्यञ्जन-s

Printed as	Pronounced as	Not as
त्र्यम्बकं यजामहे	त्र्यम्बकँयजामहे	त्र्यम्बकम् यजामहे
परमं लोके	परमँलोके	परमम् लोके
अपवर्गपदं वन्दे	अपवर्गपदँवन्दे	अपवर्गपदम् वन्दे
	<b>As pure nasal</b>	<b>Not as म्/ न्</b>
इत्थं रूपेण कीलेन	इत्थँ रूपेण कीलेन	इत्थम् रूपेण कीलेन
प्रथमं शैलपुत्री च	प्रथमँ शैलपुत्री च	प्रथमम् शैलपुत्री च
विभ्रमं सदा	विभ्रमँ सदा	विभ्रमम् सदा
गदां शक्तिं हलं च	गदाँ शक्तिँ हलञ्च	गदाम् शक्तिम् हलम् च

**Please note** that the ँ symbol has been adopted only in this training guide to denote the pronunciation of अनुस्वार that is followed by श्, ष्, स्, ह्, र्, and is not a universally recognized symbol for it. The actual pronunciation has to be learnt by listening to a trainer.

## V. Pronouncing the विसर्ग

1. The विसर्ग is pronounced like the consonant ह . The difference is that, when the consonant ह is pronounced the emphasis is on the sound (नाद) whereas for the विसर्ग the emphasis is on the thrust of air (प्राण).
2. The विसर्ग pronunciation is also dependent on the preceding vowel.

Words	विसर्ग Sounds like	Words	विसर्ग Sounds like	Words	विसर्ग Sounds like
शिवः	ह	स्मृतिः	हि	गुरुः	हु
पर्वताः	हा	नदीः	हि	धेनूः	हु
हरेः	हे	जलैः	हि	गुरोः	हो

3. When a word ending in विसर्ग is followed by another word, as per Sandhi rules the विसर्ग changes to र, श, स् or ओ , and in certain cases it is dropped.
4. When followed by words that begin with क् , ख् , प् , फ् , श् , ष् , स् it is written as विसर्ग i.e. two dots : and the pronunciation depends on the following letter.
  - i. विसर्ग followed by क् , ख् is pronounced as अर्धविसर्ग ऋ + क / ख. It is called जिह्वामूलीय. The expelling of air is instantly stopped at the throat by saying क / ख.
  - ii. विसर्ग followed by प् , फ् is pronounced as अर्धविसर्ग ऋ + प / फ. It is called उपध्मानीय. The expelling of air is instantly stopped at the lips by saying प / फ.

Printed as	Pronounced as	Printed as	Pronounced as
यः कारुण्येन	यः कारुण्येन	यः पठेत्	यः पठेत्
देव्याः कवचम्	देव्याः कवचम्	श्रीगुरोः पादुकास्मृतिः	श्रीगुरोः पादुकास्मृतिः
जनः को जानीते	जनः को जानीते	यः प्रयतः प्रणमः	यः प्रयतः प्रणमः
स्कन्धयोः खड्गिनी	स्कन्धयोः खड्गिनी	नः पाहि	नः पाहि

**Please note** that ऋ symbol denotes the अर्ध-विसर्ग. The same symbol is used for both जिह्वामूलीय and उपध्मानीय.

- iii. विसर्ग followed by क्ष् (क् + ष्) is not pronounced as जिह्वामूलीय .
- iv. विसर्ग followed by श् , ष् , स् is pronounced as श् , ष् , स् respectively .

Printed as	Pronounced as	Printed as	Pronounced as
गुरोः स्मृतिः	गुरोः स्मृतिः	शिष्यान्तःशोधने	शिष्यान्तःशोधने
चापज्यानिःस्वनेन	चापज्यानिःस्वनेन	भयार्थाः शरणं गताः	भयार्थाः शरणं गताः
साधकाः सर्वे	साधकाः सर्वे	चतुःषष्टिः	चतुःषष्टिः
प्रातः स्मरामि	प्रातः स्मरामि	शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः	शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः

## VI. ह्रस्व and दीर्घ

It is important to read the ह्रस्व and दीर्घ vowels correctly. The ह्रस्व vowels are sounded for one मात्रा , the दीर्घ vowels for two मात्रा-s. Read these words carefully-

देवी , देवि , पाहि , देहि , गुरुः , गुरुन् , गुरुणाम् , नन्दन्तु , विनश्यन्तु , भवन्तु , पश्यन्तु



**VII. अल्पप्राण and महाप्राण**

The first and the third of each class of the वर्गीय-व्यञ्जन-s are called अल्पप्राण-s. The second and the fourth of each class of the वर्गीय-व्यञ्जन-s are called महाप्राण-s.

Less air is required while pronouncing the अल्पप्राण-s and more thrust of air is required while pronouncing the महाप्राण-s. The महाप्राण-s must be read and pronounced mindfully to avoid mistakes. ([Click here to learn the महाप्राण consonants.](#))

Pronounced as	Not as	Pronounced as	Not as
समारम्भा	समारम्बा	मार्गस्थान्	मार्गस्तान्
मध्यमा	मद्यमा	स्वानन्दाम्बुधि	स्वानन्दाम्बुदि
चतुःषष्टिः	चतुःषष्टिः	तथा	तता / थता
पृथिव्याम्	पृतिव्याम्	रथाध्यक्षो	रथाद्यक्षो / रताध्यक्षो

**VIII. संयुक्त-वर्ण-s Conjunct consonants**

A संयुक्त-वर्ण is a conjunct of two or more consonants. One must familiarize oneself with conjuncts and their pronunciation. Read the following -

ज्ञानम्	भुनक्तु	नुमोऽजस्रम्	प्रायश्चित्तम्
द्वन्द्व	चक्रे / चक्रे	शस्त्रम्	मन्त्रशब्दार्थम्
मूर्ध्नि	विद्या	शिष्याग्र्यम्	पालनादुरित
वृद्धः	क्वचिदपि	त्र्यम्बकम्	सम्पन्नम्

When a conjunct of ह् with the nasals म् , न् , ण् or with semi-vowels य् , र् , ल् , व् is formed, the ह् is pronounced with more force with the help of the chest wall and abdominal muscles. Also, the ह् is pronounced first and then the next letter.

Read the following -

ब्रह्म	जाह्वी	ह्यः	आह्लादः
गृह्णाति	वह्निना	हासः	आह्वय

**IX. Impact or आघात on syllable preceding a conjunct**

When there is a conjunct made of two consonants, the earlier syllable is pronounced with an impact (आघात). The first of the conjunct is said with the preceding vowel. As a result it sounds as if it is doubled.

	Pronounced as		Pronounced as
सुप्रभातम्	सुप् + प्रभातम्	मस्तके	मस् + स्तके
अपवर्गप्रदम्	अपवर्-गप् + प्रदम्	नैवेद्यम्	नैवेद् + द्यम्
भगवत्पादम्	भगवत् + त्पादम्	नक्षत्रम्	नक् + क्षत् + त्रम्
सिद्धि	सिद् + द्धि	विद्विषावहै	विद् + द्विषावहै

This impact or आघात is not made when the conjunct is -

(i) preceded by a विसर्ग or अनुस्वार , (ii) made of same letter doubled, (iii) made of more than two letters, or (iv) the first of the conjunct is र् or ह् .

For e.g. मूर्ध्नि , कुलपर्वताः , प्रायश्चित्तं प्रवक्ष्यामि , प्रसन्नोऽस्तु , मज्जितम् , सर्वतन्त्राविरोधतः

## Section 2

## वर्णविचारः - Vowels and Consonants, Classification and places of articulation

1. Vowels are sounds produced with an open vocal tract, i.e. there is no restriction for the flow of air.
2. The vowels are ह्रस्व (short), दीर्घ (long) and प्लुत (prolonged). The sound of ह्रस्व vowels is held for one मात्रा, दीर्घ for two मात्रा-s, and प्लुत for three मात्रा-s. The प्लुत vowels are only used in Vedic chanting (hence they will not be discussed here).

## स्वर-s (Vowels)

ह्रस्व	(short – one मात्रा)	अ इ उ ऋ ॠ
दीर्घ	(long – two मात्रा-s)	आ ई ऊ ऋ ॠ
संयुक्त	(conjunct – two मात्रा-s)	ए ऐ ओ औ
स्वराश्रित	(dependent on vowels)	अं (अनुस्वार), अः (विसर्ग)

3. There are 33 consonants (व्यञ्जन-s) in Sanskrit. Consonants can be pronounced only with the help of vowels. By itself a consonant is written with हलन्त ् sign.
4. 25 consonants are termed as वर्गीय-व्यञ्जन-s. They are classified based on their place of articulation, i.e., the point of contact in the vocal tract where there is most constriction of air flow. Either some part of the tongue meets some part of the roof of the mouth or the lips meet. Because there is sharp contact of the mouth parts these consonants are also called स्पर्श-s.
5. These 25 are classified into 5 sets – क वर्ग, च वर्ग, ट वर्ग, त वर्ग, प वर्ग. The point of articulation of all consonants of one set is the same.

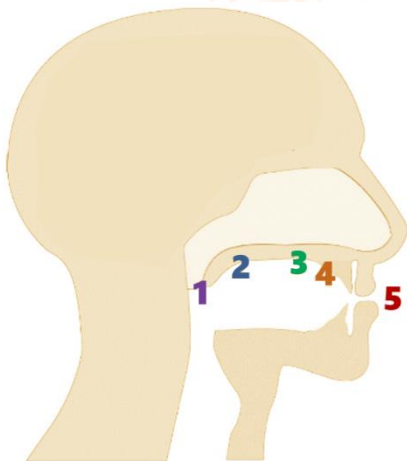
## व्यञ्जन-s (Consonants)

वर्गीय-व्यञ्जन					अवर्गीय-व्यञ्जन		
स्पर्श					अन्तःस्थ Semi- vowels	ऊष्म Sibilants	Aspirate
खर Sharp striking of mouth parts		मृदु Softer striking of mouth parts					
अल्पप्राण Less air	महाप्राण More thrust of air	अल्पप्राण Less air	महाप्राण More thrust of air	अनुनासिक Nasals			
क्	ख्	ग्	घ्	ङ्			ह्
च्	छ्	ज्	झ्	ञ्	य्	श्	
ट्	ठ्	ड्	ढ्	ण्	र्	ष्	
त्	थ्	द्	ध्	न्	ल्	स्	
प्	फ्	ब्	भ्	म्	व्		
संयुक्त-व्यञ्जनानि - क्ष् (क् + ष्), त्र् (त् + र्), ज्ञ् (ज् + ञ्)							

6. The last consonant of each वर्ग is called a nasal or अनुनासिक because while pronouncing it, air flows out both through the nose as well as the mouth.
7. The remaining 8 are unclassified consonants i.e. अवर्गीय-व्यञ्जन-s.
8. Of these, य्, र्, ल्, व् are called अन्तःस्थ-s. While pronouncing these the passage of air is not completely blocked at any stage. They are therefore called semi-vowels.
9. श्, ष्, स्, ह् are called ऊष्म-s. The tongue does not completely touch the mouth parts to block air. As air flows out, the slight constriction makes it warm and hence the name ऊष्म .

### स्थान (Place of articulation)

कण्ठः	अ	आ	क्	ख्	ग्	घ्	ङ्	ह्	ः = विसर्ग	Glottis (Throat)
तालुः	इ	ई	च्	छ्	ज्	झ्	ञ्	य्	श्	Soft palate and rear of tongue
मूर्धा	ऋ	ॠ	ट्	ठ्	ड्	ढ्	ण्	र्	ष्	Hard palate and tongue tip
दन्ताः	लृ	लृ	त्	थ्	द्	ध्	न्	ल्	स्	Top of teeth and tongue tip
ओष्ठौ	उ	ऊ	प्	फ्	ब्	भ्	म्		उपध्मानीय प्, फ्	Lips
दन्तोष्ठम्								व्		Teeth and lips
कण्ठतालु	ए	ऐ								Throat and soft palate
कण्ठोष्ठम्	ओ	औ								Throat and lips
नासिका									ं = अनुस्वारः	Nasal cavity
									अनुनासिकाः = ङ् ज् ण् न् म्	Respective place and nasal cavity
जिह्वामूलम्									जिह्वामूलीय क् ख्	Base of tongue



Based on their point of articulation

वर्ण-s are termed as –

1. कण्ठ्य Guttural
2. तालव्य Palatal
3. मूर्धन्य Retroflex
4. दन्त्य Dental
5. ओष्ठ्य Labial