

**Pronunciation Guide** (excerpts from **Bhajan Dictionary** compiled by Alova)

Vowels				
Transliteration	English	Spanish	Sanskrit	Telugu
a	mother, up	—	अ	అ
ā	father, aardvark	mamá	आ	ఆ
ai	bite, I, eye, height, aisle	baile	ऐ	ఐ
au	bout, pout, now	automóvil	औ	ఔ
e	babe, bait, grey ( <i>Sanskrit, Hindi</i> )	bebé	ए	—
ě	pet, best ( <i>Telugu</i> )	—	—	ఎ
ē	pay <i>elongated (Telugu)</i>	—	—	ఏ
i	bit, pit	—	इ	ఐ
ī	beet, beat	cisne	ई	ఈ
ḷ	revelry <i>like ḷ extremely rare</i>	—	ळ	ఱ
ḻ	<i>like ḷ extremely rare</i>	—	ॠ	ఱ
o	boat, hope	automóvil	ओ	ఒ
ō	oh <i>elongated (Telugu)</i>	—	—	ఓ
ṛ	<i>flipped and used as a vowel; in between birth and pretty</i>	—	ऋ	ఋ
ṝ	<i>brrr! as ṛ but longer; extremely rare</i>	—	ॠ	ఱ
u	put, good, full	—	उ	ఉ
ū	boot, crude, food	susurro	ऊ	ఊ

*These 3 pages may be printed out for personal use only.*

*A Note on the International Sanskrit Transliteration Code*

Sanskrit is a phonetic language: each written letter corresponds to a specific sound. Pronunciation of any written Sanskrit word is clear and unambiguous.

The Sanskrit and Telugu alphabets each have over 50 letters; the Roman alphabet has only 26. Therefore, when attempting to represent Indian languages in the Roman alphabet, something must be done to the 26 letters to allow them to represent more than 50 sounds. The International Sanskrit Transliteration Code was thus formulated by Sanskrit scholars early in the last century. Diacritical marks such as under-dots and over-bars indicate the extra sounds denoted by Sanskrit letters. This code is used in this dictionary, as well as by all major publishers of Sanskrit transliterations.

English is not a phonetic language: a sequence of letters can often be pronounced in many different ways, depending on the word. Such ambiguities naturally lead to ambiguities when using the Roman alphabet in transliteration. The International Sanskrit Transliteration Code was developed to eliminate these ambiguities.

When words from non-Indian languages are incorporated into Hindi, the sounds are represented by Hindi letters (just as transliterated Sanskrit words are represented by Roman letters). It is important to note that the transliterated sounds are for the transliterated words only, and are not general for Hindi. For example, there is no sound “z” in Hindi and therefore no Hindi letter for that sound. So the Hindi letter “j” is used to denote the “z” sound and the “zh” sound in words of foreign origin. However, the letter “j” is usually pronounced as in “just” and is only pronounced as “z” or “zh” in certain words of non-Indian origin.

*A Note on “a” and “ā”*

Please take special note of the pronunciation of “a” and “ā”. “a” is the most common vowel in Indian languages, and is formed by totally relaxing the entire throat and mouth and uttering the simplest sound possible. This sound is not used in Spanish or Italian. The open “ā” is pronounced as in Spanish or Italian.

*A Note on “ai” and “e”*

Please take note of the pronunciation of “ai” (“eye”) and “e” (“hay, hey”). A few words in Hindi spelled with “ai” are often pronounced like “ě” (“pet”), which is then spelled as “e,” and thus the sound “ai” is often mistakenly pronounced as “e.” It is easy to remember “vaidehī,” which includes both sounds.

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Consonants, Semivowels, Sibilants				
Transliteration	English	Spanish	Sanskrit	Telugu
b	bit, baby	bebé	ब	బ
c	chip, chocolate	churro	च	చ
d	dip, do	dedo	द	ద
ɖ	cerebral, tongue to roof of mouth	—	ढ	డ
g	get, go	gato	ग	గ
h	hit, hop (Latin American Spanish)	jirafa	ह	హ
ɦ	expel breath completely repeating vowel	—	ः	ః
j	job, just, general	yate	ज	జ
jñ	pronounced as gñ	—	ज्ञ	జ్ఞ
k	kit, call	qué	क	క
l	lit, look	libro	ल	ల
ɭ	cerebral, tongue to roof of mouth	—	ळ	ఱ
m	mit, moon, mother	mamá	म	మ
ṃ	pronunciation depends on following letter	—	ं	ం
ṁ	huh? final nasal sound in Hindi	—	ँ	—
n	not, no before dentals d, t	nudo	न	న
ñ	sing, sink before g, h, k, l, r, v, s, ś, ś, y	—	ढ	ఢ
ñ	banyan, singe before palatals c, j	mañana	ञ	ఞ
ɳ	cerebral, tongue to roof of mouth, before d, t	—	ण	ణ
p	pit, pen	papá	प	ప

Consonants, Semivowels, Sibilants				
Transliteration	English	Spanish	Sanskrit	Telugu
r	tongue flipped to roof of mouth	arado	र	ర
ɽ	tongue flipped to roof of mouth (Telugu)	—	—	ఱ
s	sit, sell, cell, say	silencio	स	స
ś	sure! tongue as in yet (German sch)	—	श	ష
ṣ	ship, shell	—	ष	ష
t	tip, tell	tarima	त	త
ɽ	cerebral, tongue to roof of mouth	—	ट	ఠ
v	originally vat; now sometimes as wit	vivir	व	వ
y	yet, yes	y es que	य	య

Aspirated Consonants			
Transliteration	English	Sanskrit	Telugu
bh	abhor	भ	భ
ch	catch him	छ	ఛ
dh	godhood, adhere	ध	ఢ
ɖh	---	ढ	డ
gh	loghut	घ	ఘ
jh	hedgehog	झ	ఞ
kh	blockhead, inkhorn	ख	ఖ
ph	uphill, loophole	फ	ఫ
th	anthill	थ	ఠ
ṭh	---	ठ	ఠ

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### Where Sounds Resonate

Sounds in Indian languages may be classified according to the location of the sound in the throat and mouth:

1. Guttural sounds (resonance in the throat)
a ā g gh ḥ h k kh ṅ
2. Palatal sounds (tongue touches palate)
c ch i ī j jh ñ ś y
3. Cerebral sounds (tongue tip touches roof of mouth)
ḍ ḍh ḷ ṇ ṙ ṛ ṛ (Telugu) ṣ ṭ ṭh
4. Dental sounds (tongue presses behind teeth)
d dh ḷ Ḹ l ḻ n s t th
5. Labial sounds (resonance at the lips)
b bh m p ph u ū v

### A Note on the nasal anusvāra

The nasal “ṁ” (anusvāra, Hindi “ṁ”) is written herein as “ṅ,” “ñ,” “ṇ,” “n,” “ṁ,” or “m” according to its pronunciation in the word:

ṁ before	is pronounced as
(1) guttural or semivowel	g h k l r v y
(2) palatal	c j ñ ś
(3) cerebral	ḍ ṇ ṭ ṣ
(4) dental	d n t s
(5) labial	b m p
Hindi final nasal sound	ṁ <i>final nasal in huh? or French bon</i>

For example, “saṁsāra” (worldly illusion) is correctly pronounced as “saṅsāra,” and the latter spelling is therefore used in this work. However, it will be found in a Sanskrit or Telugu dictionary under “saṁsāra” (in the appropriate alphabet) and in a Hindi dictionary under “saṁsāra.”

In modern Indian languages it has become common practice to write any nasal sound before a consonant as “ṁ” or “ṁ.” Probably as a result of “ṁ” being used for anusvara, many modern speakers incorrectly pronounce the anusvāra as “m” in all cases, rather than correctly as in the above table.

In Hindi, “ṁ” at the end of words usually denotes a plural or honorific. It is pronounced as an open nasal sound as in French “bon,” and not as a closed nasal consonant ( ṅ, ñ, ṇ, n, or m).

### Aspirated Consonants

Aspirated consonants are made by expelling breath immediately after the consonant. When pronouncing an aspirated consonant, one can feel breath on a hand that is held six inches in front of the mouth. Unaspirated consonants are pronounced with a minimum of breath.

### A Note on “t” and “th”

The International Sanskrit Transliteration Code denotes aspirated consonants (bh, ch, dh, ḍh gh, jh, kh, ph, th, ṭh) with “h” following the consonant. The Roman “th” has often been used to represent the Sanskrit or Telugu letter “t.” For example, “satya” is often spelled as “sathya.” However, the aspirated letter “th” is *not* the letter in satya, in Sanskrit or Telugu. The aspirated letter “th” is found in the words “nātha” and “daśaratha,” for example. Non-standard transliteration has no way to distinguish this aspirated letter “th” from the unaspirated “t” in “satya.” In fact, non-standard transliteration has no way to distinguish between t, ṭ, th and ṭh, or between d, ḍ, dh, and ḍh.

In order to avoid ambiguity and assist readers in correct pronunciation, the standard International Sanskrit Translation Code is used throughout this work. In pronunciation, readers are cautioned to pronounce dentals “t,” “d” and “n” with the tip of the tongue pressed tightly against the back teeth and hard palate.

Note that the “th” sound in “truth” is *not* the “th” sound in Sanskrit or other Indian languages.

### A Note on “ph”

In Sanskrit, the letter transliterated as “ph” is always pronounced as in “loophole.” There is no “f” sound in Sanskrit.

In Hindi, the incorporation of foreign words containing the sound “f” has led to the “ph” letter being pronounced as “f.” Readers are cautioned to pronounce “ph” as “ph” in Sanskrit, Hindi and Telugu, and as “f” only in words of non-Indian origin when appropriate. For example, the word “phalam” (fruit) is correctly pronounced, in all Indian languages, with the aspirated “ph” sound in “loophole,” and not with the “f” sound.