

Sanskrit Lesson

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REVIEW OF THE DIVISION OF SOUNDS

SIMPLE SOUNDS

अ	a as in 'about'.	आ	ā as in 'father'
इ	i the 'ee' of 'teen' said fast.	ई	ī as in 'teen'
उ	u the 'oo' of 'moon' said fast.	ऊ	ū as in 'moon'
ऋ	ṛ 'ri' said fast with tongue curled back.	ॠ	ṛi 'ri', tongue tip curled slightly back
ॡ	ṛ tongue as before, say ṛ.	ॢ	ṛ is never found, but 'should exist'.

All these are pronounced with a single, uniform pure sound, unlike English vowels which glide between one sound and another. The long vowels in Sanskrit, such as ā, ī, ū, take twice as long to say as the short ones, but they sound essentially the same.

COMPLEX SOUNDS

ए	e as in 'day'; is really ā + i said together fast.	ऐ	ai as in 'aisle'; ā + i together.
ओ	o as in 'go'; is ā + u said fast.	औ	au as in 'out'; made up of ā + u.

Quite sensibly, the letters go from simple to complex, and within each group the letters go in order, starting with sounds produced in the back part of the mouth, and working towards the front. This is the order used in Sanskrit dictionaries and in indices to Sanskrit works. If you know the place in the mouth that each sound comes from, you don't need to consult a chart to use a dictionary--just check your mouth.

Between the vowels and consonants are found two other letters:

ः	ḥ visarga, a kind of puff of air often at the end of words.	ं	anusvāra, 'after-sound', amounts to nasalizing the vowel before it.
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The arrangement of the consonants, or manifesters, (vyañjanāni²) is similar to that of the vowels. There are five different types, all given below:

MANIFESTERS (CONSONANTS)

<u>Stops</u>								<u>Nasals</u>	
क	ka	ख	kha	ग	ga	घ	gha	ङ	ṅa
ख	ca	छ	cha	ज	ja	झ	jha	ञ	ña
त	ṭa	ठ	ṭha	ड	ḍa	ढ	ḍha	ण	ṇa
प	ta	थ	tha	द	da	ध	dha	न	na
	pa	फ	pha	ब	ba	भ	bha	म	ma

Semi-vowels

य ya
र ra
ल la
व va

Sibilants

श śa
ष ṣa
स sa

Aspirate

ह ha

NOTES:

¹Anabhilāpya-ruta-ghoṣa-apagataṃ ca prakṛtiśāntaṃ tathāgataghoṣam adhimucyate/sarva svāra-aṅga-vibhakti-visuddhy-alaṃkāra-abhinirhāraṃ ca abhinirharati. Daśa-bhūmika-sūtra 7A.

²As was said before, vyañjanāni are also the eighty minor characteristics of the Buddha.

³The single vertical line | stands for ā.

HOW TO PRONOUNCE THE CONSONANTS

क ka karma ख kha backhand ग ga game घ gha tag hard ङ ṅa Saṅgha
च ca chart छ cha catch hat ज ja jar झ zha page half ण ṇa manual

The consonantal sounds are different from those in English for the manifestors in the next two rows below. For the first row, curl tip of tongue slightly back against the ridge behind the upper front teeth. Touch tongue quickly against the teeth to say the second row.

ट ṭa} <u>ṭ</u> ame	ठ ṭha} at heart	ड ḍa} <u>ḍ</u> ay	ढ ḍha} had <u>h</u> alf	ण ṇa} <u>ṇ</u> ame
त ta} <u>t</u>	थ tha} <u>th</u>	द da} <u>d</u>	ध dha} <u>dh</u>	न na} <u>n</u>
प pa <u>p</u> ain	फ pha haphazard	ब ba <u>b</u> ag	भ bha grab <u>h</u> ard	म ma <u>m</u> agic
य ya <u>y</u> ard	र ra 'r' with tongue as above.	ल la <u>l</u> and	व va <u>v</u> alor	
श śa <u>sh</u> ame	ष ṣa 'ch' or Chinese 'hsien')	स sa <u>s</u> ame	ह ha <u>h</u> arvest	

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