

Sanskrit/Hindi transliteration pronunciation guide

In the score and vocal parts, I use an anglicized simplified transliteration which is quite sufficient for performances, especially outside of India. (Please note that the aspiration from an "h" following a consonant is a subtle effect except in the case of "sh".) In this simplified system, given in the English alphabetical order;

The letter "a" is pronounced as "u" in "but."

The letters "aa" is pronounced as "a" in "father."

The diphthong "ai" is as in "aisle".

The diphthong "au" is as the German "Haus".

The letter "b" is pronounced as "b" in "baby"

The letter "bh" is pronounced as "b-h" in "tub-hot"

The letter "c" is pronounced as "ch" in "church."

The letter "ch" is pronounced as "ch-h" in "staunch-heart"

The letter "d" is pronounced as "d" in "road"

The letter "dh" is pronounced as "d-h" in "red-hot"

The letter "e" is pronounced as "ay" in "pay"

(avoid adding the "y" sound at the end)

The letters "ee" are pronounced as "ee" in "seed"

The letter "g" is pronounced as "g" in "goat"

The letter "gh" is pronounced as "g-h" in "dig-hard"

The letter "h" is pronounced as "h" in "heaven."

The letter "i" is pronounced as "i" in "sin"

The letter "j" is pronounced as "j" in "jiffy"

The letter "jh" is pronounced as "dge-h" in "hedge-hog"

The letter "k" is pronounced as "k" in "kite"

The letter "kh" is pronounced as "ck-h" in "kick-hard"

The letter "l" is pronounced as "l" in "light."

The letter "m" is pronounced as "m" in "mother."

The letter "n" is pronounced as "na" in "nut."

The letter "o" is pronounced as "o" in "no"

(avoid the u/w sound as the end)

The letters "oo" are pronounced as "oo" in "roof"

The letter "p" is pronounced as "p" in "popcorn."

The letters "ph" are pronounced as "p-h" in "up-hill"

(This is not pronounced like f. There is no "f" in Sanskrit.)

The letter "r" is pronounced as "r" in "right."

The letter "s" is pronounced as "s" in "seven."

The letters "sh" are pronounced as "sh" in "shut."

The letter "t" is pronounced as "t" in "hot"

The letters "th" are pronounced as "t-h" in "hot-house", and not like thin"

The letter "u" is pronounced as "u" in "should"

The letter "v" is pronounced as "v" in "victory."

The letter "y" is pronounced as "y" in "yes."

For a more exact rendition of the words, I include before the score a transliteration that comes directly from the originals, which is done by extending the Latin alphabet by means of diacritical marks. The method below is the most commonly used. This is a generalized approach that most closely approximates the North Indian style of pronunciation. Each letter in the Devanagari alphabet stands for a syllable. Below are all the instances where the diacritical method differs from the simple method described above, in the Devanagari alphabetical order.

Adapted from the KKSongs Sanskrit Pronunciation Guide

Vowels:

The letter "ā" is pronounced as "a" in "father."

The letter "ī" is pronounced as "i" in "sin"

The letter "ī̄" is pronounced as "ee" in "seed"

The letter "ū" is pronounced as "oo" in "roof"

The letter "ṛ" is pronounced as "ri" in "rip"

The letter "ṝ" is pronounced as "ree" in "reed"

The letter "ḷ" is pronounced as "lary" in "salary" (without the "a")

The letter "ń" is pronounced as "n" in "song."

(Just the n, not the g. This is the nasal element for the gutturals)

The letter "ñ" is pronounced as "ny" in "canyon"

(This is the nasal element for the palatals)

The letter "ṭ" is pronounced as "t" in "hot"

The letter "ṭh" is pronounced as "t-h" in "hot-house"

The letter "ḍ" is pronounced as "d" in "road"

The letter "ḍh" is pronounced as "d-h" in "red-hot"

The letter "ṇ" is pronounced as "na" in "nut."

(This is the nasal element for the cerebrals).

The letter "v" is pronounced as "v" in "victory." If "v" is the second half of a combined letter, then it will be pronounced like a "w."

The letter "ś" is pronounced as "sh" in "shut", tending to the German "ich".

The letter "ṣ" is pronounced as "sh" in "shine." (This is the cerebral s)

The nasal element known as the **anusvara** is ṁ. It is pronounced as "n" in "wrong" (no "g" sound included) or as "m". Choosing which it is involves rather involved Sanskrit grammatical rules.

The aspirate element known as the **visarga** is ḥ. It causes a "ha" sound. For instance, aḥ is pronounced as "aha" or iḥ is pronounced as "iha."