



Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā Pronunciation Tips

One of the most important aspects of any language is accurate pronunciation. In Sanskrit, pronunciation is very important because even minor changes in pronunciation may change the meaning of the word drastically. For eg: The word फलम् (*phalam*) means fruit, whereas पलम् (*palam*) means meat. This we can see in the गीता वाच्य - अनाश्रितः कर्मफलम् (*gītāvākya - anāśritaḥ karmaphalam*).

Similarly, the word अंसः (*aṃsaḥ*) means Shoulder, while the word अंशः (*aṃśaḥ*) means 'a portion of the whole'. This would be useful when we pronounce and understand the Gītāvākya - एकांशेन स्थितो जगत् (*ekāṃśena sthīto jagat*).

Now, the natural question which comes in our mind would be, what are these pronunciation points which we need to be conscious of? The answer is given in शिक्षा शास्त्रम् (*śikṣā śāstram*), which is the science of phonetics. One of the widely accepted phonetic texts is पाणिनीयशिक्षा (*pāṇinīya śikṣā*). This science of phonetics establishes the origin of letters i.e स्थान (*sthāna*) and the effort of pronunciation i.e प्रयत्न (*prayatna*).

These time-tested, scientific rules have many benefits. They actually make pronunciation easy. They bring consistency to the language. They make the experience of reciting and listening very sweet and blissful. Finally, above all, this science helps in meeting the main objective of not changing the intended meaning.

While these nuances of pronunciation have to be learnt under the personal guidance of a learned Guru, we are making an attempt to provide some useful tips for better pronunciation of Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā. In this section we mention both the mandatory and optional pronunciation guidelines, with some examples from the Gītā.

ASPECT 1: SHORT VOWELS AND LONG VOWELS

Let us look at Short vowels and long vowels known as ह्रस्व-स्वराः (*hrasva svarāḥ*) and दीर्घ-स्वराः (*dīrgha svarāḥ*). The short vowels are those which take one मात्राकाल (*mātrā kāla*) and long vowels are those which take two मात्राकाल (*mātrā kāla*) for pronunciation. For eg: If we take the 6th śloka from 7th chapter, it goes as follows:

॥ एतद्योनीनि भूतानि सर्वाणीत्युपधारय ॥
etadyonīni bhūtāni
sarvāṇītyupadhāraya

Here, in the word एतद्योनीनि (*etadyonīni*), the first नी (*nī*) is दीर्घ (*dīrgha*), and the second नि (*ni*) is ह्रस्व (*hrasva*). In भूतानि (*bhūtāni*) and उपधारय (*upadhāraya*) – we should be more careful to end the पाद (*pāda*) with ह्रस्व (*hrasva*) only.

Next, If we take śloka 14 of chapter 7,

॥ दैवी ह्येषा गुणमयी मम माया दुरत्यया ॥
(daivī hyeṣā guṇamayī mama māyā
duratyayā)

Here we can observe the *dīrgha* at the end of दैवी, ह्येषा, गुणमयी, माया and दुरत्यया.

ASPECT 2: LESS EFFORT AND HIGH EFFORT LETTERS

Now let us go to the pronunciation of less effort letters and high effort letters known as अल्पप्राणाः (*alpaprāṇāḥ*) and महाप्राणाः (*mahāprāṇāḥ*). For eg: If we take śloka no. 16 in chapter 7:

॥ आर्तो जिज्ञासुरथार्थी ॥
(ārto jijñāsuraṥarthī)

Here, the first त in आर्तो is अल्पप्राण and in the word अर्थार्थी – both the थकार (*thakāra*) are महाप्राणः.

ASPECT 3: NASAL LETTERS

The third important aspect is Nasal letters known as अनुनासिकाः (*anunāsikāḥ*). The pronunciation of अनुनासिक (*anunāsika*) letters is as follows:

ङ – as in सत्सङ्ग (*satsaṅga*)

ञ – as in युञ्जीत (*yuñjīta*)

ण – पारायणम् (*pārāyaṇam*)

na and ma as in – नमः (*namaḥ*)

Now if we see śloka 8 in chapter 5, this is a good example to practice the अनुनासिकः.

॥ पश्यञ्श्रुण्वन्स्पृशञ्जिघ्रन्नाच्छन्वपञ्चसन् ॥
(paśyañśrṇvanspṛśañjighrannaśchhan
svapañśvasan).

ASPECT 4: 'ŚA' VS 'ṢA' – TĀLAVYA 'ŚA' VS MŪRDHANYA 'ṢA'

Now let us see the next guideline which is the difference between श śa as in śiva and ष ṣa as in ṣaṇmukha.

If we see – śloka 2 of chapter 7 -

॥ इदं वक्ष्याम्यशेषतः ॥

(idaṃ vakṣyāmyaśeṣataḥ)

Here, the first श (ś) in अशेषतः (*aśeṣataḥ*) is तालव्य-शकार (*tālavya-śakāra*) and the second ष (ṣ) is मूर्धन्य-षकार (*mūrdhanya-ṣakāra*).

ASPECT 5: HAKĀRA AND VISARGA

Let us look at the following examples.

In śloka 23 of Chapter 13,

॥ प्रकृतिं च गुणैः सह ॥

(prakṛtiṃ ca guṇaiḥ saha)

where हकार (*hakāra*) is used

In śloka 47 of Chapter 1;

॥ शोकसंविग्रमानसः ॥

|| śokasamvignamānasaḥ ||

where visarga is used.

ASPECT 6: COMPOUND LETTERS

Now let us look at the sixth aspect. This pertains to the usage of compound letters in words known as संयुक्ताक्षराणि (*saṃyuktākṣarāṇi*) In this aspect, care should be taken to pronounce each letter of the संयुक्ताक्षर (*saṃyuktākṣara*). Some examples are śloka 9 in 7th Chapter

॥ जीवनं सर्वभूतेषु तपश्चास्मि तपस्विषु ॥
(*jīvanaṃ sarvabhūteṣu tapaścāsmi tapasviṣu*)

Here the श śa in तपश्चास्मि, and स sa in तपस्विषु has to be carefully pronounced. Another example where 3 letters are compounded would be

॥ अहं कृत्स्नस्य जगतः ॥
(*ahaṃ kṛtsnasya jagataḥ*)

We can also look at examples involving अनुनासिकs.

śloka 2 in Chapter 7 is

॥ यज्जात्वा नेह भूयोऽन्यत् ज्ञातव्यमवशिष्यते ॥
(*yajjātvā neha bhūyo'nyat jñātavyamavaśiṣyate*)

ASPECT 7: VISARGA GUIDELINES

The seventh aspect would be Visarga related guidelines.

i) The first would be Visarga succeeded by सकारः (*sakāraḥ*). Here the visarga takes the form of 'S'. For eg, Śloka 19 in Chapter 7 –

॥ वासुदेवः सर्वम् इति ॥
(*vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti*)

Here we have 2 सकारs.

ii) When विसर्ग is succeeded by क Ka, ख kha, it is replaced by another letter called as जिह्वामूलीय (*jihvāmūliya*).

For example in Śloka 8 of Chapter 7

॥ शब्दः खे पौरुषं नृषु ॥

(*śabdaḥ khe pauruṣaṃ nṛṣu*). Here we can observe the जिह्वामूलीय.

iii) When Visarga is followed by प Pa, फ Pha, it is replaced by another letter called ' उपध्मानीय (*upadhmaniya*) . For eg: in the 1st Śloka of 7th Chapter,

॥ मय्यासक्तमनाः पार्थ ॥

(*mayyāsaktamanāḥ pārtha*)

we can observe the उपध्मानीय.

iv) In case Visarga is followed by 'क्ष Kṣa' the visarga has to be fully pronounced. For eg: in Śloka 13, in Chapter 12,

॥ समदुःखसुखः क्षमी ॥

(*samaduhkhasukhaḥ kṣamī*)

Also note the pronunciation of the word दुःख (*duḥkha*)carefully.

v) In case ओकारः (*okāraḥ*) occurs at the end of a Pāda, as seen in Śloka 24 of Chapter 7, ॥ परं भावम् अजानन्तो ॥ (*paraṃ bhāvam ajānanto*) the word is split as

॥ परं भावम् अजानन्तः ॥

(*paraṃ bhāvam ajānantaḥ*)

, according to Sandhi rules; if we are pausing at the end of the pāda.

vi) Sometimes visarga at the end of a pāda gets eliminated. This is called लोपकार्य (*lopakārya*).

When we are splitting the pāda, we need to pronounce the visarga in that place. For eg: in the Śloka 28 of Chapter 7,

ते द्वन्द्वमोहनिर्मुक्ता भजन्ते मां दृढव्रताः

(*te dvandvamohanirmuktā bhajante mām dṛḍhavrataḥ*).

Here Visarga needs to be pronounced at the end of the pāda, If we are pausing at the end of the pāda, As

ते द्वन्द्वमोहनिर्मुक्ताः भजन्ते मां दृढव्रताः

(*te dvandvamohanirmuktāḥ bhajante mām dṛḍhavrataḥ*).

vii) Now consider the Śloka 22 in 7th Chapter

स तया श्रद्धया युक्तस्तस्याराधनमीहते

(*sa tayā śraddhayā yuktastasyārādhanamīhate*)

Here if we are pausing at end of the pāda, we need to pronounce as;

स तया श्रद्धया युक्तः तस्याराधनमीहते

(*sa tayā śraddhayā yuktaḥ*

tasyārādhanamīhate)

ASPECT 8: ANUSVĀRA GUIDELINES

Now let us come to the eighth aspect which pertains to अनुस्वार (*anusvāra*) ।

i) In case of anusvāra followed by any वर्गीय व्यञ्जन (*vargīya vyañjana*), the anusvāra is replaced by the fifth letter of the corresponding varga. This is an optional rule when anusvāra is at the end of the word. We have exercised and followed this option in our product fully.

For eg: In śloka 3 of 1st chapter,

॥ आचार्य महतीं चमूम् ॥

(*ācārya mahatīm camūm*)

can be optionally pronounced as –

॥ आचार्य महतीञ्चमूम् ॥

(*ācārya mahatīñcamūm*)

In case anusvāra is followed by यकारः (*yakāra*), लकारः (*lakāraḥ*), वकारः (*vakāraḥ*) optionally, these three letters take the अनुनासिक form.

For eg: 8th śloka in chapter 15

शरीरं यद् अवाप्नोति

(*śarīraṃ yad avāpnoti*)

can be optionally pronounced as

शरीरय्यदवाप्नोति

śarīrayyadavāpnoti

which we have followed in this product.

In the 12th śloka of Chapter 1

सिंहनादं विनद्योच्चैः

(*siṃhanādaṃ vinadyoccaiḥ*)

can be optionally pronounced as

सिंहनाद्विनद्योच्चैः

siṃhanādavinadyoccaiḥ

which is adopted in this product.

Now with the blessings of Jagadguru Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, let us enjoy the bliss of Gītā-mātā, by observing and experiencing these pronunciation aspects.

