

Bhagavad Gītā Chanting Guidelines

DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

1. श्लोकः ślokaḥ : A stanza or verse
2. पादः pādaḥ : A quarter of a verse
3. विसर्गः visargaḥ : A symbol in writing, representing a distinct hard aspiration and marked by two perpendicular dots (:) in देवनागरी devanāgarī script as found in the ending of the words like कृष्णः Kṛṣṇaḥ and रामः Rāmaḥ
4. **Aspiration:** It means to pronounce with a puff or breath.
5. वर्गः vargaḥ: A class or series of consonants in the alphabet.
Example, क वर्ग ka varga is क् ख् ग् घ् ङ् k kh g gh ṅ
6. अल्पप्राणः alpaprāṇaḥ A non-aspirated consonant is called अल्पप्राणः alpaprāṇaḥ. For example, क् k is non-aspirate
7. महाप्राणः mahāprāṇaḥ: An aspirate consonant is called महाप्राणः mahāprāṇaḥ . For example, ख् kh is aspirated
8. अनुस्वारः anusvāraḥ: This is nasalization and is represented by a dot above as in फलं phalaṁ

HERE ARE A FEW GUIDELINES FOR CORRECT PRONUNCIATION:

1. The distinction between अल्पप्राणः alpaprāṇaḥ and महाप्राणः mahāprāṇaḥ must be scrupulously maintained.

For example, the word अभयं abhayaṁ (Chapter 16, verse 1) should not be pronounced as अबयः abayaḥ , the word त्यागश्शान्तिरपैशुनम्

tyāgaśśāntirapaiśunam (Chapter 16, verse 2) should not be pronounced as द्यागशान्दिरपैशुनम् dyāgaśśāndirapaiśunam. Care should also be taken for maintaining clarity of pronunciation of the letters.

The same is true for all other अल्पप्राणः **alpaprāṇaḥ** and महाप्राणः **mahāprāṇaḥ** consonants.

2. A श्लोकः ślokaḥ or a verse is divided into four पादाः **pādāḥ** (quarters) while reciting. Take for example the श्लोकः ślokaḥ verse no. 7 in Chapter XVI

प्रवृत्तिं च निवृत्तिं च जना न विदुरासुराः ।

न शौचं नापि चाचारः न सत्यं तेषु विद्यते ॥ ७ ॥

pravṛttiṁ ca nivṛttiṁ ca janā na vidurāsurāḥ ।

na śaucam nāpi cācāraḥ na satyam teṣu vidyate ॥ 7॥

This verse is divided while chanting into four

Quarter 1: प्रवृत्तिं च निवृत्तिं च **pravṛttiṁ ca nivṛttiṁ ca**

Quarter 2: जना न विदुरासुराः । **janā na vidurāsurāḥ ।**

Quarter 3: न शौचं नापि चाचारः **na śaucam nāpi cācāraḥ**

Quarter 4: न सत्यं तेषु विद्यते ॥ **na satyam teṣu vidyate ॥**

The division into four quarters is only to enable easy chanting.

3. The aspiration of the विसर्गः visargaḥ followed by क् k ख् kh प् p फ् ph should be distinctly audible. For example:

क्रोधः पारुष्यमेव **krodhaḥ pārūṣyameva** (Verse 4, Chapter XVI)

द्विषतः क्रूरान् **dviṣataḥ krūrān** (Verse 19, Chapter XVI)

The विसर्गः **visargaḥ** has to be distinctly aspirated as per the grammatical rules of the संस्कृत Samskr̥ta language.

4. अनुस्वारः **anusvārah** followed by any consonant may be pronounced in tune with the 5th nasal letter of the वर्गः **vargah** .

For example:

Verse Number	Word - wrong	Should be pronounced as
1	न शशांको na śaśāṅko	न शशाङ्को na śaśāṅko
2	भुंजानं bhunjānaṁ	भुञ्जानं bhuñjānaṁ
3.	जितसंगदोषाः jitasangadoṣāḥ	जितसङ्गदोषाः jitasanṅgadoṣāḥ
4.	संन्यास saṁnyāsa	संन्यास sannyāsa

5. ऋ **r̥** should not be pronounced as रि **ri** or रु **ru** . For example, कृष्णः **kṛṣṇaḥ** should not be pronounced as क्रिष्णः **kriṣṇaḥ** or क्रुष्णः **kruṣṇaḥ** . For example, प्रवृत्तिं **pravṛttiṁ** should not be pronounced as प्रव्रूत्तिं **pravrūttiṁ** प्रव्रित्तिं **pravrittiṁ**. (Verse 7, Chapter XVI)

6. Colophon: ॐ तत्सदिति **Om tatsaditi** or ॐ तत्सत्, इति **Om tatsat, iti**

7. दीर्घ **dīrgha** (long sounds) ह्रस्व **hrasva** (short sounds):

अ इ उ ऋ - these are the short sounds – pronounced short. – ह्रस्व **hrasva**

आ ā; ई ī; ऊ ū; ऋ ṛ; ए e; ऐ ai; ओ o; औ au; अं am; अः aḥ – are long sounds.

Of these, the sounds: आ ā; ई ī; ऊ ū; ऋ ṛ; should be pronounced longer than the short sounds. The other sounds can be pronounced per the demands of the meter.

Bhagavad Gītā Chanting Competition

Judges' scoring Rules

(For questions, please contact Pujya Swami Sharananandaji)

1. **Completeness of Chanting:** (Total points equal to # of Shlokas to be chanted)
 - a. The verses are to be chanted in correct order and fully.
 - b. One point for each fully and completely chanted verse.
 - c. Prompting: One prompt will be allowed with no deduction of a point. No second prompting.

Missed verse: One point to be deducted for each missed verse: for example,

- Any verse missed partially or completely;
 - Inserting the missed verse anywhere out of sequence
 - Mixing lines of different verses.
- d. The introduction (Atha pañcadaśo) and the ending (i.e. śrīmad bhagavad gītā su) do not count toward completeness and must not affect the scoring.
 - e. However, the student **must** chant (Śrī Bhagavāna uvāca or Arjuna uvāca) correctly prior to chanting the Shloka.
 - f. If the participant corrects his/her own mistake and proceeds to chant, no points are deducted in this category. However, note that this may affect the subjective score for 'Confidence' and/or 'Ease of chanting' categories.

2. **Clarity of Chanting :** Total of 10 points

- a. Diction: crisp
- b. Tone: Continuous and smooth
- c. Flow: in **Anuṣṭhupa chandaḥ** (i.e. break each line after the 8th syllable).
For example: 'ūrdhvamūla madhaḥśākham' break... 'aśvattham
prāhuravyayam'.

3. **Confidence and Ease of Chanting:** Total of 10 points

- a. Poise: Composure, distracting habits
- b. Presentation: Verses chanted in correct order, without interruptions, fumbling or need for prompting.

4. **Pronunciations:**

- a. A **visargaḥ**:
 - should be pronounced fully only when applicable (typically at the break of a line or at the end of a line),
For example: na tadbhāsayate sūryaḥ , na śaśāṅko na pāvakaḥ
 - should not be chanted fully in the middle of the line.
For example: ūrdhvamūla madhaśśākham'

- b. A **dīrgha** or prolonged sound should be chanted twice as long as the hrasva or short sound.

For example: **ūrdhvamūla** madhaśśākham' (bolded prolonged sounds)
aśvattham prāhuravyayam'.(bolded short sounds)

- c. **Sandhi vicchedaḥ** to be done properly. (split compound words correctly if needed).
- d. Halant should be chanted properly.
- e. The following letters are to be chanted with clear distinction from each other:
 - ka versus kha, ga versus gha, ta versus tha, da versus dha
 - example: ghore gītā niṣṭhā buddhi

 - all **sa ṣa śa** sounds to be clearly pronounced.

 - **Avagrahas** are not to be chanted (letter ‘s’ in Saṁskṛta shlokas and ‘.a’ in English transliteration)

 - N sounds – **na, ṇa** – to be clearly and distinctly chanted.
for example: karmāṇi , manasā

 - A participant repeating the same mistake shall be penalized only once.