

# INTRODUCTORY SANSKRIT I

YALE UNIVERSITY, FALL 2018

## Contents

1	August 30, 2018	1
2	August 31, 2018	3

# 1 August 30, 2018

Linguistics was the model science in ancient india

Today, we'll talk about phonology — range of sounds, how they're identified. Phonology is the sound structure of a language, as opposed to syntax or semantics. For the time being we'll transliterate Sanskrit into the Latin script; tomorrow, we'll move on to devanagari. Sanskrit has been written in a variety of scripts, but devanagari is the most commonly used. Much of the historic writings in Sanskrit are written in Devanagari or one of its predecessors.

Sanskrit's phonological system is very “scientific” — it's very systematic and structured. Grammarians divide sounds in Sanskrit into two groups: the *svara*, or vowels; and the *vyañjana*, or consonants.

## Svara

In Sanskrit, svara (meaning sound, tone, or accent) are sounds which can be pronounced independently, contrasting with consonants which have an implied vowel associated with them. There are 14 vowels in Sanskrit (really only 13) which are organized by two orthogonal qualities: the place of articulation and the length.

Hrasva	Dīrga	Long and short vowels are distinguished by the number of <i>mātrā</i> they consume. You can think of <i>mātrā</i> as a kind of tempo marking for the language; short vowels, or <i>hrvasa</i> , last for “one beat” of time, while long vowels, or <i>dīrga</i> , last for two.
a	ā	In ancient Vedic Sanskrit, there was a third category of vowels, called protracted vowels or <i>pluta</i> , which lasted for three beats, but these were lost in Classical Sanskrit. Vowels can also be simple ( <i>śuddha</i> , or “pure”), or complex ( <i>samyukta</i> , or “joined”). Samyukta are known in linguistics as diphthongs, and are made from the combination of two or more <i>śuddha</i> .
i	ī	
u	ū	
ṛ	ṝ	
ḷ	ḹ <sup>1</sup>	
e	ai	
o	au	

<sup>1</sup> This vowel is never attested, and only exists to complete the chart

In the table on the left, the samyukta are the bottom four.

Here are some examples of the vowels in Sanskrit words:

Abhava (absense, destruction)	Ātman (self)
Idam (this)	Īśvara (lord)
Ubhaya (both)	Abhūt (was)
Kṛṣṇa (Krishna)	Nṝṇām <sup>2</sup> (Of men)
Kḷpti (arrangement)	—
Etad (this)	Bhojana (food)
Chaitanya (a saint)	Saubhagya (good fortune)

<sup>2</sup> The consonant *ṝ* is very rare, appearing only in nominative and genetive nouns

## Consonants

There are three kinds of consonants in SKRT. Consonants are classified by the place of articulation (sthāna): - Velar or kan.t.hya - soft pallette, palatal (talva) - hard pallette, retroflex (murtanyo) - dental (danta) - labial (os.t.ha)

Also classified by the closure of the lips - full contact, stops (sparśa)

Voiced/Unvoiced - ghośavat (voiced) - aghośa (unvoiced)

Aspiration - in english, spin vs pin, cut vs king - Alpha prana (unaspirated) - maha prana (aspirated)

## 2 August 31, 2018