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VOWELS

Those Letters are called Vocales, Vowels, in pronouncing of which by the Instruments of Speech, the breath is freely emitted; and they are therefore stiled Apert or open Letters. These may be distinguished either, 1. Formally, by their several Apertions, and the manner of configuration in the instruments of Speech required to the framing of them, which constitutes the distinct species of Vowels; or 2. Accidentally, by the quantity of time required to their prolation, by which the same Vowel is made either long or short.

There are (I conceive) eight simple different species of Vowels, easily distinguishable, whose powers are commonly used. I cannot deny, but that some other intermediate sounds might be found; but they would, by reason of their proximity to those others, prove of so difficult distinction, as would render them useless; these eight seem|ing to be the principal and most remarkable periods, amongst the degrees of Apert sounds.

- based on measurements
 - long vowel
 - short vowel
 - medium vowel

NAME							
alpha	α Short	Bot-tom	Fol-ly	Fot	Mot	Pol	Rod
	α Long	Bought	Fall	Fought		Paule	Rawd
a	a Short	Batt	Val-ley	Fatt	Mat	Pal	Rad-nor
A	a Long	Bate	Vale	Fate	Mate	Pale	TRade
e	e Short	Bett	Fell	Fet	Met	Pell	Red
E	e Long	Beate	Veale	Feate	Meate	Peale	Reade
i	i Short	Bitt	Fill	Fitt	Mit-ten	Pill	Rid
I	i Long	Beete	Feele	Feete	Meete	Peele	Reede
o	o Short						
O	o Long	Bote	Foale	Vote	Mote	Pole	Rode
	{ou} Short		Full	Fut		Pul	
	{ou} Long	Boote	Foole	Foot	Moote	Poole	Roode
	y Short	But	Full	Futt	Mutt-on	Pull	Rudd-er
	y Long						Amongst

Also known as: *svara-sandhi*, *ac-sandhi*

Vowel **sandhi** is the name for **sandhi** changes between two adjacent vowels.

Here is a simple example of vowel **sandhi**:

- सीता उदकम् इच्छति → सीतोदकम् इच्छति
- sītā udakam icchatī → sītōdakam icchatī
- Sita drinks water.

Table of changes Generally, there are two ways we can describe **sandhi** rules:

The traditional approach is to study rules. This approach can be difficult at first. But over time, it helps

us master all of [sandhi](#)'s details.

The Western approach is to arrange these changes in a [table](#) or grid. This approach is simplistic and misses many details. But it is often easier for beginners to understand.

Each approach has its strengths and weaknesses. In this lesson, we will use both. To start, here is a [table](#) that shows the basics of vowel [sandhi](#) between two words:

a/ā	i/ī	u/ū	ṛ/ṝ	e	ai	o	au	
ā	ya	va	ra	e'	ā a	o'	āva	a
ā	yā	vā	rā	a ā	ā ā	a ā	āvā	ā
e	ī	vi	ri	a i	ā i	a i	āvi	i
e	ī	vī	rī	a ī	ā ī	a ī	āvī	ī
o	yu	ū	ru	a u	ā u	a u	āvu	u
o	yū	ū	rū	a ū	ā ū	a ū	āvū	ū
ar	yṛ	vṛ	ṛ	a ṛ	ā ṛ	a ṛ	āvṛ	ṛ
ar	yṝ	vṝ	ṝ	a ṝ	ā ṝ	a ṝ	āvṝ	ṝ
ai	ye	ve	re	a e	ā e	ave	āve	e
ai	yai	vai	rai	a ai	ā ai	a ai	āvai	ai
au	yo	vo	ro	a o	ā o	a o	āvo	o
au	yau	vau	rau	a au	ā au	a au	āvau	au

To use this [table](#), find the first [sound](#) on the top row and the second [sound](#) on the right column. The corresponding [cell](#) in the [table](#) is the result. For example, if the first [sound](#) is i or ī and the second [sound](#) is ū, then the result is yū.

For details, read the rules below.

Similar vowels If the two vowels are similar, they combine and become long:

सीता अश्वम् इच्छति → सीताश्वम् इच्छति sītā aśvam icchati → sītāśvam icchati Sita wants a horse.

शबरी इषुम् इच्छति → शबरीषुम् इच्छति śabarī iṣum icchati → śabarīṣum icchati Shabari wants [an arrow](#).

Dissimilar vowels If the two vowels are not similar, one of three things happens.

First: if the first vowel is simple and not a or ā, it becomes a semivowel:

- शबरी अश्वम् इच्छति → शबर्य् अश्वम् इच्छति
- śabarī aśvam icchati → śabary aśvam icchati
- Shabari wants a horse.
- शबरी उदकम् इच्छति → शबर्य् उदकम् इच्छति
- śabarī udakam icchati → śabary udakam icchati
- Shabari wants [water](#).

Second: if the first vowel is a or ā, the two vowels combine and become a compound vowel:

- सीता उदकम् इच्छति → सीतोदकम् इच्छति
- sītā udakam icchati → sītodakam icchati
- Sita wants [water](#).

But if the second vowel is ॠ, ॡ, or ॢ, it becomes a semivowel instead:

- सीता ऋषिम् पश्यति → सीतर्षिं पश्यति
- sītā ṛṣim paśyati → sītārṣim paśyati
- Sita sees a rishi.
- (Note that the result is ar, not ār.)

Third: if the first vowel is a compound vowel (e, ai, o, au), it becomes ay, āy, av, or āv, respectively:

- ने + अ + न्ति → नयन्ति
- ne + a + nti → nayanti
- They lead.
- भो + अ + न्ति → भवन्ति
- bho + a + nti → bhavanti
- They become.

These rules explain most of vowel sandhi. With a few more specific rules, we will have a nearly complete picture of vowel sandhi in Sanskrit.

Compound vowels at the end of a word At the end of a word, the compound vowels -e, -ai, and -o usually make extra changes.

Let's start with -ai since it changes in a more simple way. -ai becomes -ā when a vowel follows it. The idea is that -ai first becomes -āy, as we saw above. Then the y sound is dropped:

- तस्यै अश्वम् ददामि → तस्या अश्वं ददामि ।
- tasyai aśvam dadāmi → tasyā aśvaṃ dadāmi.
- I give her a horse.
- तस्यै उदकम् ददामि → तस्या उदकं ददामि ।
- tasyai udakam dadāmi → tasyā udakaṃ dadāmi.
- I give her water.

In these examples, note that tasyā ends with a vowel and the next word starts with a vowel. Does vowel sandhi happen again? No. tasyā does not combine further.

-e generally follows the same pattern as -ai. -e becomes -a in front of most vowels:

- ते आम्रम् इच्छन्ति । → त आम्रम् इच्छन्ति ।
- te āmram icchanti. → ta āmram icchanti.
- They want a mango.
- ते उदकम् इच्छन्ति । → त उदकम् इच्छन्ति ।
- te udakam icchanti. → ta udakam icchanti.
- They want water.

But if the second vowel is a, then -e doesn't change. Instead, the a disappears:

- ते अश्वम् इच्छन्ति । → ते ऽश्वम् इच्छन्ति ।
- te aśvam icchanti. → te 'śvam icchanti.
- They want a horse.

This change is similar to what happens in the combination aḥ + a. a disappears often in Sanskrit:

- रामः अश्वम् इच्छति । → रामो ऽश्वम् इच्छति ।
- rāmaḥ aśvam icchati. → rāmo 'śvam icchati.
- Rama wants a horse.

-o generally follows the same pattern as -e.

Vowels that don't use **sandhi** The vowels -ī, -ū and -e, if they are part of a word that uses the dual number, are never changed by **sandhi**:

- अग्नी अपश्यम्
- agnī apaśyam
- I saw the two fires.
- रामो बाहू उद्यच्छति
- rāmo bāhū udyacchati
- Rama raises his two **arms**.
- तौ लभेते अश्वान्
- tau labhete aśvān
- The two of them obtain horses.

Verb prefixes If a **verb** prefix ends with a or ā and the root starts with ṛ, the two combine to form ār instead of the usual ar:

- उप + ऋच्छति → उपाच्छति
- upa + ṛcchati → **upā**rcchati
- (Someone) approaches.
- (a + ṛ becomes ār because upa is a **verb** prefix.)
- सीता ऋच्छति → सीतच्छति
- sītā ṛcchati → sītarcchati
- Sita goes.
- (ā + ṛ becomes ar because sītā is not a **verb** prefix.)

visarga sandhi

visarga **sandhi** is the **name** for **sandhi** changes where the first **sound** is the visarga. Here is a simple example of visarga **sandhi**:

- रामः योद्धुम् इच्छति → रामो योद्धुम् इच्छति ।
- rāmaḥ yoddhum icchati → rāmo yoddhum icchati.
- Rama wants to fight.

Many Sanskrit words end in the visarga, so visarga **sandhi** is very common.

Where does the visarga come from? The visarga itself comes from a **sandhi** change. s and r become the visarga when they appear at the end of a word:

- रामस् → रामः
- rāmas → rāmaḥ
- Rama

- मातर् → मातः
- mātar → mātah
- mother!

Most of the visargas you hear and see will come from s. A very small number will come from r. If the visarga comes from r, its [sandhi](#) rules have some small differences. So it is important for us to know which [sound](#) the visarga comes from.

[Table](#) of changes Some learners find it helpful to see these [sandhi](#) changes in a [table](#). So, here is a basic summary of visarga [sandhi](#):

-as	-ās	-s	-r	
o'	ā	r	r	a
a	ā	r	r	other vowels
o	ā	r	r	voiced consonants
aś	āś	ś	ś	c, ch
aṣ	āṣ	ṣ	ṣ	ṭ, ṭh
as	ās	s	s	t, th
aḥ	āḥ	ḥ	ḥ	other consonants

To use this [table](#), find the ending of the word on the top row. Then find the second [sound](#) on the right column. The corresponding [cell](#) in the [table](#) is the result. For example, if the first term ends in -ās and the next one starts with c or ch, then the result is -āś.

Common changes Some changes are common and apply to all visarga sounds.

If the second [sound](#) is unvoiced, the visarga can become ś, ṣ, or s to match the second [sound](#)'s point of pronunciation. Here are some examples:

- बालः चरति → बालश् चरति
- bālah carati → bālaś carati
- The boy walks.
- बालः टिप्पणीम् पठति → बालश् टिप्पणीं पठति
- bālah ṭippaṇīm paṭhati → bālaṣ ṭippaṇīm paṭhati
- The boy reads the commentary.
- बालः तिष्ठति → बालस् तिष्ठति
- bālah tiṣṭhati → bālas tiṣṭhati
- The boy stands.

These changes may even occur in front of śa, ṣa, and sa. But these changes are usually not written down:

- नरः शिलां गच्छति (नरश्शिलां गच्छति)
- naraḥ śilāṃ gacchati (naraśśilāṃ gacchati)
- The man goes to the rock.
- नरः षण्डं गच्छति (नरश्षण्डं गच्छति)
- naraḥ ṣaṇḍaṃ gacchati (naraṣṣaṇḍaṃ gacchati)
- The man goes to the thicket.
- नरः सागरं गच्छति (नरस्सागरं गच्छति)

- naraḥ sāgaraṃ gacchati (narassāgaraṃ gacchati)
- The man goes to the ocean.

-ās sandhi

If the visarga ends a term that originally ended in -ās, then it disappears if any voiced [sound](#) follows:

- नराः उदकम् पिबन्ति → नरा उदकं पिबन्ति
- narāḥ udakam pibanti → narā udakam pibanti
- The men drink [water](#).
- नराः मद्यम् पिबन्ति → नरा मद्यं पिबन्ति
- narāḥ madyam pibanti → narā madyam pibanti
- The men drink wine.
- नराः वमन्ति → नरा वमन्ति ।
- narāḥ vamanti → narā vamanti.
- The men vomit.

-as [sandhi](#) If the visarga ends a term that originally ended in -as, then it becomes o if any voiced consonant follows:

- नरः मद्यं पिबति → नरो मद्यं पिबति
- naraḥ madyam pibati → naro madyam pibati
- The man drinks wine.

And if the second [sound](#) is a, then we replace all three sounds with o:

- नरः अमृतं पिबति → नरो ऽमृतं पिबति
- naraḥ amṛtaṃ pibati → naro 'mṛtaṃ pibati
- The man drinks nectar.

The ' symbol, which is called the avagraha, often shows that a vowel was removed due to [sandhi](#).

Otherwise, the visarga disappears before other vowels, just as we saw with -ās above:

- नरः उदकम् पिबति → नर उदकं पिबति
- naraḥ udakam pibati → nara udakam pibati
- The man drinks [water](#).
- नरः ओदनम् इच्छति → नर ओदनम् इच्छति
- naraḥ odanam icchati → nara odanam icchati
- The man wants rice.

Other changes Otherwise, the visarga becomes r in front of any voiced [sound](#):

- अग्निः अस्ति → अग्निर् अस्ति
- [agniḥ](#) asti → agnir asti
- There is a [fire](#).
- वायुः अस्ति → वायुर् अस्ति
- vāyuḥ asti → vāyur asti

- There is wind.
- द्वाः (द्वाः) अस्ति → द्वार् अस्ति
- dvāḥ (dvār) asti → dvār asti
- There is a **door**.

But if the second **sound** is r, the visarga disappears and the vowel before it becomes long:

- अग्निः रोचते → अग्नी रोचते
- **agni**ḥ rocate → agnī rocate
- The **fire** is pleasing.
- वायुः रोचते → वायू रोचते
- vāyuḥ rocate → vāyū rocate
- The wind is pleasing.
- द्वाः (द्वाः) रोचते → द्वा रोचते
- dvāḥ (dvār) rocate → dvā rocate
- The **door** is pleasing.

sa and eṣa The words **sa**ḥ (“he,” “that one”) and eṣaḥ (“he,” “this”) are very common in Sanskrit. They have their own unique visarga changes. But thankfully, those changes are simple. In front of a, they behave as you would expect:

- सः अचिन्तयत् → सो ऽचिन्तयत्
- **sa**ḥ acintayat → so 'cintayat
- He thought.
- एषः अपश्यत् → एषो ऽपश्यत्
- eṣaḥ apaśyat → eṣo 'paśyat
- He saw.

But in front of all other sounds, the visarga disappears:

- सः इच्छति → स इच्छति
- **sa**ḥ icchati → **sa** icchati
- He wants.
- सः चिन्तयति → स चिन्तयति
- **sa**ḥ cintayati → **sa** cintayati
- He thinks.
- एषः पश्यति → एष पश्यति
- eṣaḥ paśyati → eṣa paśyati
- He sees.

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