

A  
PRIMER  
IN  
GRANTHA  
CHARACTERS

By K. Venugopalan



A Primer in Grantha Characters

by

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## Preface

Modern research in Sanskrit requires the ability to read manuscripts in Grantha characters, especially where text editing is concerned. Primers or guides to the Grantha script are not available in many libraries. Those texts which had formerly been available are either out of print or not readily available for sale. I have been approached by many scholars, both Indian and Western, to read manuscripts in Grantha script or transcribe them into Devanāgarī characters. The following is a small attempt to acquaint those scholars required to read Grantha manuscripts or inscriptional material with this script.

Grantha has a very early origin. Its association with the Dravidian scripts, particularly with Tamil, is well known. More details on this topic may be found in books on Indian paleography by A. C. Burnell, G. Bühler, and others.

The written form of a script varies from individual to individual and it is not possible to give all such variations. The idiosyncrasies of a hand must be ascertained from each manuscript. But a scholar who is acquainted with the language and the standard printed form of the characters will find it easy to identify all the variations. Hence I have taken into account only the printed form of the characters.

I hope this will suffice as an introduction to the scholar. Suggestions for correction or improvement will be gratefully received.

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## Table of Contents

Preface . . . . .	iii
Grantha Characters	
Vowels . . . . .	1
Consonants . . . . .	1
Consonant-Vowel Combinations . . . . .	2
Conjunct Consonants . . . . .	4
Semivowel <u>r</u> . . . . .	6
Semivowel <u>y</u> . . . . .	7
Consonants <u>t</u> and <u>n</u> . . . . .	8
Consonant <u>m</u> and <u>anusvāra</u> . . . . .	8
Easily Confused Characters . . . . .	9
Aids for Reading	
Words without Conjuncts . . . . .	10
Words with Conjuncts . . . . .	12
Passages for Reading Practice	
Selections from the Bhagavadgītā . . . . .	13
Brahmasūtra Śāṅkarabhāṣyārambhaḥ . . . . .	14



## The Grantha Characters

### Vowels

a अ ऋ	u उ ॒	i इ ऋ	o ओ ॒
ā आ ऋ	ū ऊ ॒	ī ई ऋ	oī औ ॒
i इ ऋ	y य ऋ	e ए ऋ	m̄ ॒
ī ई ऋ	ȳ य̄ ऋ	ē ए̄ ऋ	m̄ : ॒

### Consonants

k क् ३	kh ख् ३	g ग् ३	gh ग् ३	ṅ ङ् ३
c च् ३	ch च् ३	j ज् ३	jh ज् ३	ñ ञ् ३
t ट् ३	th ट् ३	d ड् ३	dh ड् ३	n ण् ३
t त् ३	th त् ३	d द् ३	dh द् ३	n न् ३
p प् ३	ph प् ३	b ब् ३	bh ब् ३	m म् ३
y य् ३	r र् ३	l ल् ३	v व् ३	s श् ३
ṣ ष् ३	s स् ३	h ह् ३	ḥ ३	kṣ क्ष् ३

1. This long vowel never, to my knowledge, occurs in literature. Yet it is given for the sake of symmetry in all primers. I have omitted it from the charts of consonant vowel combinations. The short vocalic l is replaced by the consonant @ in many mss. This should be apparent, after practice, with knowledge of Sanskrit.

2. This retroflex bears possible influence from Tamil. It is frequently replaced by @ (ॠ) except in Tantric works where it is a separate बीजमन्त्र.

3. Ǝ denotes a consonant without an added vowel. It is equivalent to the virāma in Devanāgarī.





The conjunct consonants, as a rule, are written one above the other. The upper one is the pure consonant and the lower one is pronounced with the required vowel. The vowel sign is written after the conjunct or over the upper one according to the sign. Examples are:

kka	क्क	as in	cikkarah	चिक्रणः	चिक्रणाः
ika	क्का	"	jhankarah	झङ्कारः	झङ्कारः
kki	क्कि	"	phakkikā	फक्किका	फक्किका
kti	क्कि क्ति	"	bhaktih	भक्तिः	भक्किः
eni	क्नी	"	patni	पनी	पन्नी
stu	क्स्तु	"	stutih	स्तुतिः	स्तुत्तिः
ktī	क्क्त्ति	"	bhoktīnām	भोक्त्तिणां	भोक्त्तिणां
sle	क्श्ले	"	slesah	श्लेषः	श्लेषः
ṣṇa	क्ष्ण	"	viṣṇuh	विष्णुः	विष्णुः
ṣṇi	क्ष्णि	"	vṛṣṇih	वृष्णिः	वृष्णिः
ṛni	क्वृ	"	vahniḥ	वह्निः	वह्निः
lli	क्लि	"	mallikā	मल्लिका	मल्लिका
ste	क्ष्टे	"	kastena	कष्टेन	कष्टेन
ṣṭā	क्ष्ठा	"	sāṣṭāṅgam	साष्टाङ्गम्	साष्टाङ्गम्

Some consonants change shape in conjuncts giving the conjuncts a special combined form. Following are all such forms:

jñ	ज्ञ	as in	yajñah jñānam	यज्ञः ज्ञानम्	यज्ञः ज्ञानम्
ñc	ञ्च	"	pañca	पञ्च	पञ्च
ñj	ञ्ज	"	pañjarah	पञ्जरः	पञ्जरः
tth	त्थ	"	utthitah	उत्थितः	उत्थितः
tv	त्व	"	gatvā	गत्वा	गत्वा
ddh	द्ध	"	buddhiḥ s'uddhaḥ	बुद्धिः सुद्धः	बुद्धिः सुद्धः
dv	द्व	"	dvīḥ dvedhā	द्विः द्वेषा	द्विः द्वेषा
nt	न्त	"	sāntaḥ kuntī	शान्तः कुन्ती	शान्तः कुन्ती
nth	न्थ	"	pañthāḥ	पन्थाः	पन्थाः
nd	न्द	"	vindati vanditah	विन्दति वन्दितः	विन्दति वन्दितः
ndh	न्ध	"	bandhaḥ bandhuh	बन्धः बन्धुः	बन्धः बन्धुः

The consonant **र** (र, र) is represented in two ways. When following a consonant it is written as **्र** under the consonant; but when it precedes a consonant it takes the form **र्** written after the consonant or conjunct.

kr	क्र	as in	Krandati Kvāntiḥ krīṇāti	क्रन्दति क्रान्तिः क्रीणाति	क्रु र्दुत्ति क्रुा ङ्किः क्री ण्णात्ति
tv	त्र	as in	tvāsaḥ	त्रासः	त्रुा लः
str	स्त्र	as in	stṛī	स्त्री	स्त्रुी
ndr	न्द्र	"	caṇdraḥ	चन्द्रः	चुन्द्रुः
ntv	न्त्र	"	mantraḥ tantri	मन्त्रः तन्त्री	मिन्त्रुः तन्त्रुी
			BUT		
rk	र्क	"	arkaḥ	अर्कः	अर्कः
rc	र्च	"	carcā arciḥ	चर्चा अर्चिः	चुचुर्चा अर्चुर्चिः
rts	र्त्स	"	bhartsitaḥ	भर्त्सितः	भुत्सुत्सुत्तः
vyā	र्व्या	"	paryāptam	पर्याप्तम्	पर्याप्तुम्
rdhv	र्ध्व	"	ūrdhvam ardham	ऊर्ध्वम् अर्धम्	ऊर्ध्वुम् <sup>1</sup> अर्धुम् <sup>1</sup>

1. In many cases (both in print and mss.) a **व** (dv, ध्व) is replaced by **व्ह** (dvh, ध्व्ह). Other examples are:

ध्रुवम् - ध्रुव्हुम् ; अध्यायः - अध्याय्हः

The consonant य (य, य) is represented in conjuncts by the symbol य only when it is the final member. But when the conjunct contains an initial ऋ (र, र), ऋ (र) takes the last place.

ky	क्य	as in	s'akyaḥ	शक्यः	षाक्योः
cy	च्य	as in	prācyah	प्राच्यः	प्राच्योः
ty	त्य	as in	āgatyā	आगत्य	सुप्रत्यो
jy	ज्य	as in	ijyā	इज्या	शुज्यो
rjy	र्ज्य	as in	nirmārjya	निर्मार्ज्य	निर्मार्ज्यो
rnjy	र्ण्य	as in	nirvarṇya	निर्वर्ण्य	निर्वर्ण्यो
rtjy	र्त्स्य	as in	vibhartsya	विभर्त्स्य	विभर्त्स्यो
rthy	र्थ्य	as in	prārthya	प्रार्थ्य	प्राथ्यो
rtjny	र्त्स्य	as in	kārtśnyam	कार्त्स्न्यम्	कार्त्स्न्यो
yy	य्य	as in	nicāyya	निचाय्य	निचाय्यो
gny	ग्न्य	as in	agnyādhanam	अग्न्याधानम्	सुप्रत्योऽग्न्याधानम्
			<u>But</u>		
yv	व्य	as in	vāyvagnī	वायवग्नी	वायव्यो

The final **क** (t, त) is written as **क** and the final **क** (n, न) as **क**. Normally this will be at the end of the sentence but in print and mss. it is found in the middle of sentences as well as in combinations. This can be easily recognized. Examples are:

tasmāt	तस्मात्	क ङ्गा क
utksīpya	उत्क्षिप्य	२ क्क्षिप्ये
sainvatsare	संवत्सरे	संवत्सरे
utpādya	उत्पाद्य	२ क्त्वाद्ये
avocan	अवोचन्	क्त्वाद्यन्
trīn kramān	त्रीन् क्रमान्	क्त्वाद्यन्
bhagvān bodhā- yanah	भगवान् बोधा- यनः	क्त्वाद्यन् क्त्वाद्यन्

The final **ः** is written as **ः** and the medial anusvāra as a **०**. Anusvāra occasionally replaces the nasals except **ञ**.

mañkhaḥ	मङ्कः	३००ः ० '३ ०ः
kañṭhaḥ	कण्ठः	कण्ठः ० क००ः
śambhuh	शंभुः	श०भुः ० श०भुः
bandhaḥ	बन्धः	ब०न्धः ० ब०न्धः
pānīyam	पानीयम्	पा०नीयम्
jalam	जलम्	ज०लम्
kūlam	कूलम्	क०लम्

In conjuncts with more than two consonants, when any two have a combined form, it is always written as such.

ktv	क्त्वं	as in	paktvā	पक्त्वा } पक्त्वा }	पक्त्वा
ndr	न्द्रे	as in	candraḥ	चन्द्रेः	चन्द्रः
ndv	न्द्वे	as in	dvandvah	द्वन्द्वेः	द्वन्द्वः
ntv	न्त्वे	as in	tāntrikah	तान्त्रिकेः	तान्त्रिकः
ndy	न्द्ये	as in	vandyah	वन्द्येः	वन्द्यः
nty	न्त्ये	as in	bhrāntyā	भ्रान्त्या	भ्रान्त्या

### Important

Care should be taken to distinguish the following pairs, particularly while reading manuscripts:

- ॒ (u, उ) and ॒ (d, ढ)  
 ॒ (p, प) and ॒ (v, व)  
 ॒ (p, प) and ॒ (c, च)  
 ॒ (ph, फ) and ॒ (ch, छ)  
 ॒ (y, य) and ॒ (dh, ध)  
 ॒ (v, व) and ॒ (kh, ख)  
 ॒ (u, उ) and ॒ (o, ओ)  
 ॒ (d, ढ) and ॒ (o, ओ)  
 ॒ (anusvāra) and ॒ (ṭh, ठ)  
 ॒ (i, इ) and ॒ (ñ, ङ)

Aids for Reading

Words without conjuncts:

abhayam	अभयम्	അഭയം
āyah	आयः	ആയം
iyam	इयम्	ഈയം
ītiḥ	इतिः	ഇതി:
wragah	उरगः	ഉരഗം
upa dhā	उपधा	ഉപധാ
ūṣarā	ऊषरा	ഊഷരാ
ṛṇam	ऋणम्	ഋണം
ṛkārah	ऋकारः	ഋകാരം
eṣah	एषः	ഈഷ:
airāvataḥ	ऐरावतः	ഈരവത:
oghaḥ	ओघः	ഔഘം
auśadham	औषधम्	ഔഷധം
Kapiḥ	कपिः	കപി:
Khagah	खगः	ഖഗം
gūḍham	गूढम्	ഗൂഢം
ghanah	घनः	ഘനം
catulam	चटुलम्	ചടുലം
Chalah	छलः	ഛലം
jīvanam, jalam	जीवनम्, जलम्	ജീവനം, ജലം
jharī	झरी	ജരീ
ṭikā	टीका	ടീകാ
ṭhālīnī	ठालिनी	ഠാലിനീ
ḍamaruḥ	डमरुः	ടമര:
ḍhaukanam	डौकनम्	ടൗകനം
tauḷikah	नौलिकः	നൗലികം

dipah  
 dhiṣaṇah  
 virodhah  
 paisācah  
 phāṇitam  
 Bijah  
 bhitiḥ  
 bhavān  
 mithunam  
 yonih  
 rohinī  
 līlā  
 vairī  
 sāmī  
 śadānanah  
 saudhāminī  
 hīrah  
 pātālah  
 pulinam  
 vapanam  
 viparītah  
 vivaraṇam  
 pavamānah  
 ilā  
 lālanam  
 dalam  
 śābalam  
 yodhah

दीपः  
 धिषणः  
 निरोधः  
 पैसाचः  
 फाणितम्  
 बीजः  
 भीतिः  
 भवान्  
 मिथुनम्  
 योनिः  
 रोहिणी  
 लीला  
 वैरी  
 हामी  
 षडाननः  
 सौधामिनी  
 हीरः  
 पाताकः  
 पुत्तिनम्  
 वपनम्  
 विपरीतः  
 विवरणम्  
 पवमानः  
 इला  
 लालनम्  
 दलम्  
 शबलम्  
 योधः

டீவஃ  
 யிஷணஃ  
 நிரொயஃ  
 பைசாசஃ  
 ஷாணிதஃ  
 பீஜஃ  
 ஹீதிஃ  
 ஹவாநு  
 மிதுநஃ  
 யொநிஃ  
 ரொஹிணி  
 லீலா  
 வைரீ  
 ஸாமி  
 ஷடானநஃ  
 ஸௌயாமிநீ  
 ஹீரஃ  
 பாநகாநஃ  
 புத்திநஃ  
 வபநஃ  
 விவரீதஃ  
 விவரணஃ  
 பவரீநஃ  
 ஹலா  
 லாலநஃ  
 தலஃ  
 ஸாபலஃ  
 யொயஃ

## Words with conjuncts:

añcitatḥ	आञ्चितः	காண்கிடு :
kuñjarah	कुञ्जरः	கூணூர :
ākaraṣaṇam	आकर्षणम्	கூகஷணம்
agnih	अग्निः	காழி :
ātma	आत्मा	கூகூ :
pingalāḥ	पिङ्गलः	விஜூல :
kuṇḍalam	कुण्डलम्	கூம்புமல (ண)
tāmbūlam	ताम्बूलम्	தாம்பூலம்
induh	इन्दुः	ஊநூ :
vijñānam	विज्ञानम्	விஜ்ஞானம்
śrutvā	श्रुत्वा	பூகூபா
indrāṇi	इन्द्राणी	ஊநூரணி
dantī	दन्ती	தந்தி
pārthivah	पार्थिवः	பாதிவ :
kārṣṇyam	कार्ष्ण्यम्	காஷ்யம்
pārṣṇih	पार्ष्णिः	பாஷி :
kaśmīn's'cit	कस्मिञ्चित	கஸிம்சுதி (கஸி)
dhārṣṭyam	धाष्ट्यम्	யாஷ்யம்
kaṣpūrah	कपूरः	கபூர :
parvan	पर्वन्	பவந :
bandhūkah	बन्धुकः	பநூக :
vandyah	वन्यः	வநூ :
ucchritam	उच्छ्रितम्	உச்சிதம்
dāridryam	दारिद्र्यम्	தாரிரியம்
pārśvam	पार्श्वम्	பாஷ்யம்
dhairyam	धैर्यम्	தைய்யம் (தைய)
chandas	छन्दस्	சுந்தஸ் (சுநஸ்)
udarah	उदरः	உதர :







