

Lesson 2. अहं versus अहम्

To answer those riddles, we must first get familiar with the स्वरस (vowels) and the व्यञ्जन स (consonants).

अ आ इ ई उ ऊ ऋ ॠ लृ लृ ए ऐ ओ औ अं अः are the स्वर स.
They are complete in themselves and do not require the help of another letter to be pronounced. स्वर स are sixteen in number.

The व्यञ्जन स, on the other hand, are incomplete. They can be pronounced only with the help of a स्वर.

For example, the क we know and recognize, is actually a combination of क् and अ . क = क् + अ . Without the अ , the क् is unpronounceable..(is there such a word ? !)
का = क् + आ and so on and so forth.

A व्यञ्जन HAS to join up with a स्वर to be pronounced. If the व्यञ्जन is a combination of two व्यञ्जन स, as in प्ल , you still need a स्वर , in this case an अ , to be added to the ल to pronounce the "conjunct" प्ल ।

The व्यञ्जन स are

क्	ख्	ग्	घ्	ङ्
च्	छ्	ज्	झ्	ञ्
ट्	ठ्	ड्	ढ्	ण्
त्	थ्	द्व	ध्व	न्
प्	फ्	ब्	भ्व	म्
य्	र	ल्	व्	श्
ष्	स्	ह्	ळ्	क्ष्

Thirty five of them.

Interesting fact..Sixteen स्वर स plus thirty five व्यञ्जन स make up the वर्णमाला । Add to it , three ॐ स , it gives us fifty four. Fifty four

plus fifty four, add up to a hundred and eight. We go over the entire वर्णमाला twice, forwards and backwards, when we do one माला of जप ।

The व्यञ्जन s highlighted in the table are called अनुनासिक व्यञ्जन s । The oblique stroke at the bottom of the consonants is called a हलन्त् । That means the sound of that consonant is clipped.

A small example...the English word "cup" is pronounced as "कप्" and कप् is cuppa (as in I wanna cuppa tea...gottit?)

In a sentence like अहम् अनामिका (i am Anamika) the म् is written as म् to enable it to join with the अ (a स्वर) in अनामिका , to form the complete letter म । The sentence then becomes अहमनामिका ।

If the sentence were अहम् तारा , the म् is unable to join with the त in the ता (a व्यञ्जन) of the तारा, to form a single complete letter. It could become म्ता , but that would make it a conjunct and not a single complete letter. Does the difference come through clearly?

When faced with the prospect of becoming a conjunct, म् converts itself into a dot and places itself above the previous letter. Maintaining an identity of its own, it now calls itself an अनुस्वार ।

The correct form of the sentence then becomes अहं तारा ।

So म् is written as म् , in two cases.....

1. when म् is the last letter in a word and when the letter after it , in the next word , is a स्वर and
2. when it is at the end of a sentence...eg. तारा अहम् । (Why does म् remain a म् at the end of a sentence? Beats me. Some rules are just stated and we, poor things, just accept them.)

Interesting fact.. Only म् has the authority to be used as an अनुस्वार. This changes the entire concept on how to write and pronounce a word correctly. Details in Lesson No. Three. Answers to riddle two in Lesson three too.