

ॐ श्री गुरुभ्यो नमः

Arvind Balasubramanian

Sanskrit for Beginners

A simple and comprehensive guide



Generated on 9 October 2022.

For the latest version, see <https://learnsanskrit.org/guide>.

Contents

Preface to the print edition	6
0 Introduction	7
0.1 For beginners	8
0.2 For experts	13
1 Core lessons	18
1.1 The Sanskrit language	19
1.2 Basic vowels	21
1.3 Short and long vowels	25
1.4 Semivowels	29
1.5 Compound vowels	31
1.6 Consonants	36
1.7 <i>anusvāra</i> and <i>visarga</i>	43
1.8 Syllables	47
1.9 Sandhi	51
1.10 Sentences	58
1.11 Nominals	62
1.12 Verbs	70
1.13 Uninflected words	78
1.14 Prefixes	82
1.15 Suffixes	86
1.16 Compounds	90
1.17 Review	93
2 Sounds	100
2.1 The sound system	101
2.2 Vowels	102
2.3 Consonants	107
2.4 Other sounds	111
2.5 Modern pronunciation	113
3 Sandhi	115
3.1 The sandhi system	116
3.2 Vowel sandhi	118

3.3	<i>visarga sandhi</i>	124
3.4	Consonant sandhi between words	130
3.5	Consonant sandhi within a word	138
4	Nominals 1: Normal stems	142
4.1	The nominal system	143
4.2	Basic nominal endings	151
4.3	- <i>a</i> stems	157
4.4	- <i>ā</i> , - <i>ī</i> , and - <i>ū</i> stems	161
4.5	- <i>i</i> and - <i>u</i> stems	166
4.6	- <i>ṛ</i> stems	175
4.7	- <i>ai</i> , - <i>o</i> , and - <i>au</i> stems	182
4.8	Consonant stems	186
5	Nominals 2: Pronouns and numbers	200
5.1	<i>asmad</i> and <i>yuṣmad</i>	201
5.2	<i>tad</i> , <i>etad</i> , <i>idam</i> , and <i>adas</i>	205
5.3	<i>kim</i> and <i>yad</i>	213
5.4	Pronominal adjectives	221
5.5	Number words	223
6	Verbs 1: Special tense-moods	238
6.1	Special tense-moods	239
6.2	The present tense	243
6.3	The command mood	246
6.4	The ordinary past tense	248
6.5	The potential mood	251
6.6	<i>ātmanepada</i>	254
6.7	The <i>bhū</i> , <i>div</i> , <i>tud</i> , and <i>cur</i> classes	259
6.8	The <i>su</i> , <i>tan</i> , and <i>krī</i> classes	266
6.9	The <i>ad</i> and <i>rudh</i> classes	275
6.10	The <i>hu</i> class	286
6.11	<i>karmaṇi</i> and <i>bhāve prayoga</i>	291
7	Verbs 2: Other tense-moods	296
7.1	Other tense-moods	297
7.2	The simple future tense	300

7.3	The conditional mood	303
7.4	The distant future tense	305
7.5	The distant past tense	308
7.6	The recent past tense	319
7.7	The blessing mood	322
8	Verbs 3: Derived roots	325
8.1	Causal roots	326
8.2	Desiderative roots	329
8.3	Nominal roots	333
8.4	Intensive roots	335
9	Uninflected words	338
9.1	Types of uninflected words	339
9.2	The <i>upasarga</i>	341
9.3	Other prefixes	346
9.4	<i>ca</i> , <i>vā</i> , and others	349
9.5	Adverbs	353
10	Suffixes	354
10.1	The suffix system	355
10.2	<i>-tvā</i> and <i>-ya</i>	358
10.3	<i>-ta</i> and <i>-tavat</i>	363
10.4	<i>-tum</i>	365
10.5	<i>-tavya</i> , <i>-anīya</i> , and <i>-ya</i>	368
10.6	<i>-at</i> , <i>-āna</i> , and <i>-vas</i>	371
10.7	Other root suffixes	375
10.8	Nominal suffixes	379
11	Compounds	383
11.1	The compound system	384
11.2	The <i>dvandva</i>	388
11.3	The <i>tatpuruṣa</i>	391
11.4	The <i>bahuvrīhi</i>	394
11.5	The <i>avyayībhāva</i>	397
12	Sentences	398
12.1	Sentence structure	399

12.2	Agreement	402
12.3	Verbless sentences	407
12.4	Questions	409
12.5	Relative phrases	414
12.6	Participles	418
12.7	The eight cases	422
13	Devanagari	429
13.1	How Devanagari works	430
13.2	Vowels and consonants	433
13.3	Vowel marks	436
13.4	Consonant clusters	438
13.5	Numerals and punctuation	442
13.6	Old Devanagari	444
13.7	Vedic Devanagari	445
14	Other scripts	446
14.1	Romanized Sanskrit	447
15	Sanskrit software	450
15.1	Why use Sanskrit software?	451
15.2	The Harvard-Kyoto system	452
15.3	How to type in Sanskrit	454
15.4	How to use a Sanskrit-English dictionary	455
16	Lists	457
16.1	Grammatical Terms	458

Preface to the print edition

This is the print edition of the *Sanskrit for Beginners* guide hosted at learnsanskrit.org. We generated this PDF document on 9 October 2022 by processing our website with a special program.

This PDF contains all of the same content that our website does. Although PDFs are less interactive than a standard web page, they are easier to print or to use with e-readers or similar devices. We hope that you find this PDF useful for your needs.

If you have any questions or comments about the material, please reach out to us at learnsanskrit.org/contact.

Introduction

For beginners

Sanskrit is an ancient Indian language that is still spoken and written today, and **grammar** is the name for a language's rules. Our guide to Sanskrit grammar uses clear and simple language, and it does not expect any special background knowledge. At the same time, our guide is as complete and comprehensive as any textbook on the market today.

Acquiring and studying

First, we want to tell you something very important about language learning:

There are two ways we can develop skill in a language: we can **acquire** it or we can **study** it. Acquiring and studying need different methods and produce different results.

Someone who has *acquired* Sanskrit can understand Sanskrit as quickly and easily as you can understand this sentence. We acquire Sanskrit by engaging with Sanskrit content (such as stories and conversations) that we enjoy and understand.

Someone who has *studied* Sanskrit can deeply explain how Sanskrit words and sentences work and what rules they follow. We study Sanskrit by learning and practicing grammar rules.

Our guide focuses on *studying* Sanskrit and not on *acquiring* it. So if you want to acquire Sanskrit, we strongly recommend that you use the resources below:

- [Amarahāsa](#): free online stories written especially for acquiring Sanskrit.
- Samskrita Bharati ([India](#), [US](#)): Conversational Sanskrit. Includes workshops, classes, correspondence courses, and in-person events.
- [Vyoma-Samskrta-Pāthasālā](#): Online Sanskrit lectures in a classroom format.

You can find more resources [on our site's Resources page](#).

What our guide can and cannot do for you

There are countless resources for learning Sanskrit grammar. Why create another? We created our guide because we could not find a resource that was:

- clear and simple
- complete and useful
- easy to search
- delightful to the eye and ear
- freely available

Most importantly, we believe that a guide should do one thing well rather than two things acceptably. Acquiring and studying Sanskrit need radically different approaches, and we do not think they should be mixed in one resource.

Think of our guide as a *map* of Sanskrit. A map gives you a basic sense of the world around you. A map is useful if you don't know where you are. But even the best map cannot replace the real world.

Our guide can give you a basic sense of Sanskrit, and it can help you understand the words and sentences you see. But it cannot convey what real Sanskrit is like, because *no grammar resource can*. At some point, you must engage with real Sanskrit content. And that means *acquiring* Sanskrit rather than just studying it.

If you have *any* interest in reading Sanskrit (as opposed to slowly translating it), we urge you to pair our guide with a resource that focuses on acquisition. Just as a map is secondary to the real world, let our guide be secondary to the content you experience.

How our guide is structured

Our guide has a tree structure. Its trunk is a list of **core lessons** that conveys Sanskrit's core principles, and its branches are the different **topics** we use to describe Sanskrit's systems in detail. Once you finish our core lessons, you can read the rest of the guide's topics in whatever order you like. *You* decide what you want to study.

Each lesson in our guide covers one concept or a small set of related concepts. We make each concept clear and concrete by including multiple examples. Finally, we end the lesson with a short review about the lesson's main ideas.

We focus on concepts, *not* on busywork. This means our guide has:

- *no* translation exercises
- *no* vocabulary lists
- *no* word drills
- *no* memorization tasks

It may be a shock to you that our guide avoids these devices. Many Sanskrit resources love and rely on them, and we used to love and rely on them too. But ultimately, it is *far* more effective and *far* more enjoyable to engage with meaningful content that focuses on acquisition.

Many resources also use complicated technical language to describe Sanskrit. Technical language is sometimes necessary. But as much as possible, we use simple and clear language that ordinary people can understand. And for each concept we discuss, we include plenty of examples to make the discussion clear and concrete.

In case it is useful to you, lessons after the core lessons will also include the standard English and Sanskrit terms for each concept. These terms will help you more easily use other resources outside of our guide.

How to use our guide

It's simple:

1. **Read the core lessons and answer all of their review questions.** These core lessons are the foundation for the rest of the guide, so it is important to study them well. A tree with a weak trunk will wither and crumble, but a tree with a strong trunk will endure and thrive.
2. **Once you understand the core lessons, read any topic you like.** Choose any topic you like. When reading a topic, make sure to read its lessons in order. This is because each lesson in a topic builds on the previous ones.

Learning Sanskrit is easier and more fun when you have friends to help you. So please [write to us](#) with questions, comments, or anything else you want us to know. We love receiving email, and we will send you a reply as soon as we can.

Since it is important, we will say this again: we **strongly** recommend that you pair this guide with a resource that focuses on acquisition. If you find a word or phrase that you do not understand, you can always read our guide for help, just as you might read a map when you are lost.

What to use if you don't like our guide

No resource is perfect for everybody. If you have decided that our guide is not right for your needs, we have other resources we can recommend. Please also [let us know](#) what you wish our guide could offer you.

If you want to acquire Sanskrit, we recommend the resources we mentioned above. Or if you ultimately feel most comfortable with the textbook format, here are the English-language textbooks we recommend for beginners:

- *Introduction to Sanskrit Volumes I and II* by Thomas Egenes. This simple and gentle series explains Sanskrit grammar bit by bit.
- *The Cambridge Introduction to Sanskrit* by Antonia Ruppel. This beautiful work is friendly, methodical, and clear, and it is an excellent follow-up to the Egenes set above.

You can find more resources [on our site's Resources page](#).

About the author

Sanskrit is like a massive and beautiful forest. Many of the people who enter this forest get tangled in a jungle of complicated explanations. And a few unlucky travelers are eaten by the tigers of anxiety, boredom, doubt, and frustration. I created this guide to give ordinary people a clear and enjoyable path through that forest.

I used to believe that grammar was the only way to learn Sanskrit. I now believe that most Sanskrit learners should focus on *acquiring* Sanskrit rather than *study-*

ing it. But there will always be people who love and appreciate grammar, just as I do. And there is certainly a need for a resource that explains Sanskrit clearly, simply, and completely.

I dedicate this guide to my grandparents: B. Raghavachari, Mohana Raghavachari, the late S. Rangaswamy, and the late Malathi Rangaswamy. I also dedicate it to you, and to all those who love and learn Sanskrit.

24 September 2021

Copyright

This guide is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license. This means that you can use this guide however you like, as long as you credit learnsanskrit.org. But please read the full license for details.

For experts

This longer introduction is meant for advanced readers, such as teachers, scholars, those who may know some Sanskrit already, or those who simply want to know more about the guide. This page covers the same information as our introduction for beginners, but it does so in a deeper and more sophisticated way.

If you are already satisfied by our introduction for beginners, you can skip this section and move on to the next one.

Our intended audience

Our guide is for anyone who wants to read Sanskrit literature and who wants to learn grammar to make sense of what they read. Grammar is a technical subject, but we do not expect any background knowledge in grammar, linguistics, or related fields.

Too often, resources for teaching Sanskrit (especially those written in English) use an academic and highly technical style. This is fine *per se*, but as a whole, this technical style carries an implicit message: “Sanskrit is something only an elite person can know and learn. If you are not an elite, Sanskrit is not for you.”

We reject this idea completely. We believe that anyone who wants to learn Sanskrit should be able to do so and that it is our responsibility to encourage and nurture learners rather than throw them into a sea of rules and jargon.

Second language acquisition research

Our starting point, and the basis for our approach to Sanskrit grammar, is the main finding from second language acquisition research: acquiring and studying a language are different mental processes and respond to different techniques.

The realm of acquisition is essentially one of subconscious, implicit, and organic growth in the learner's implicit mental representation of the language, which develops through exposure to interesting and level-appropriate content. Consistent exposure to such content over time is enough to acquire any language to a very

high level, perhaps when paired with the limited and ad-hoc study of explicit grammar rules.

The realm of study is essentially one of conscious, explicit, and willful development of an explicit model of the language and its rules, which occurs through the diligent study and application of various rules, often to a list of intentionally memorized words. Consistent study of rules is enough to develop deep mastery but has little relationship to the fast and accurate real-time interpretation of content in our language of interest.

Although the exact relationship between these explicit and implicit modes of engagement is still unclear in the research, what can be said with some confidence is that the neurolinguistic processes involved are different enough to treat implicit (acquisition) and explicit (studying) approaches to language as two different activities.

In the future, we'll add some links to the literature here. For now, we recommend the works of Bill VanPatten and Susan Gass.

Focusing on explicit grammar

In light of this division, we see the textbook model as fundamentally flawed because it attempts to support the divergent activities of implicit and explicit study simultaneously. If implicit knowledge is knowing how to throw a ball, explicit knowledge is knowing the kinematic equations that describe the ball's trajectory. Knowing the calculus of kinematics has some incidental relationship to throwing a ball, but in a pragmatic sense, neither provides much insight into the other.

Here is a small example of what we mean. A person *rides* a bicycle or skateboard or scooter or motorcycle but *drives* a car or truck and *pilots* a boat or airplane. The semantics of these three words are similar, but it is difficult to articulate a specific and explicit rule that accounts for the difference. Such is the real-world behavior of human language.

Given this divergence between implicit and explicit representations of language and the approaches necessary to cultivate them, we have focused solely on build-

ing up an explicit representation of Sanskrit. This narrower perspective is profoundly liberating and allows us to perform one task simply and effectively.

But perhaps we should address the critical question: why study grammar at all?

Mainly, grammar offers a shortcut to working through ancient Sanskrit literature. We use the phrase “working through” deliberately: the slow, word-by-word analysis of a sentence is completely different from the fast, accurate, and real-time understanding of a sentence that arises through acquisition.

But there are other compelling reasons to pursue the study of grammar. Grammar is interesting for its own sake, especially given Sanskrit's long tradition of linguistics and grammatical study. Grammar can clarify doubts on usage and meaning for those interested in composition or exegesis. And grammar can provide structure for those learners who crave structure and certainty.

What are the specific advantages of focusing solely on explicit representation?

The first is that we can omit many of the devices that are shown in the literature to be ineffective, such as translation drills, conjugation drills, vocabulary lists, and other kinds of what we might call “language practice.” These devices sap time and energy from the student and are not particularly effective for acquisition, which is their intended focus in the first place.

The second is that we can sequence our content in an entirely different way. In the standard textbook, introducing a new topic for discussion is an expensive and costly thing to do, because the assumption is that the student must memorize most or all new material that is presented. But more critically, these topics must be presented with an eye to acquisition. As a result, important but grammatically unusual features are either unreasonably delayed or introduced piecemeal and out of sequence. When we are free of these constraints, we can present Sanskrit's major systems clearly and comprehensively.

If we omit any devices aimed at acquisition, what is our answer to the acquisition problem? What do we recommend that learners do?

Simply, we encourage the use of resources aimed directly at Sanskrit acquisition, such as:

- [Amarahāsa](#): free online stories written especially for acquiring Sanskrit.
- Samskrita Bharati ([India](#), [US](#)): Conversational Sanskrit. Includes workshops, classes, correspondence courses, and in-person events.
- [Vyoma-Samskrta-Pāṭhaśālā](#): Online Sanskrit lectures in a classroom format.

That said, there will always be those who find anything other than ancient literature to be a waste of time. Now that our grammar guide has matured, we are building an assisted reading environment for such learners. Assisted reading is not an optimal acquisition environment because the material involved is far too complex for beginning and intermediate learners. But we see such an approach as a pragmatic compromise for those who insist on grammar-based approaches.

Style and intended audience

Our focus is ordinary people who want to read Sanskrit literature and who want to use grammar to make sense of what they read. Perhaps some of these people are comfortable with technical expressions like “partitive genitive” or “past passive participle” and delight in the intricacies of grammar. (We can certainly relate!) But to most people, such terms are confusing, intimidating, and sterile. We want to include as many learners as we can, so we avoid this complex and highly technical jargon and prefer simple, everyday language.

This does not mean, however, that we dumb down our content.

As an example, one of the common Sanskrit suffixes is *-ta*. *-ta* is often termed a “past passive participle” suffix. This term is problematic in two ways. First, it doesn't make any sense (unless the reader knows about past tenses, the passive voice, and participles). Second, it is a poor fit for Sanskrit specifically:

- Many roots use *-ta* in an *active* sense (e.g. *gata*).
- Many roots use *-ta* without any clear past sense at all (e.g. *śakta*).
- The concept of “participles” is much less powerful than just considering the class of Sanskrit verbal suffixes (also known as *kṛt* suffixes) as a whole.

Rather than laboriously explain this suffix using terms that poorly fit the way Sanskrit works, we can simply say instead that the suffix *-ta* generally shows that someone “has acted” or “has been acted on,” with a few examples. The suffix is thus tied immediately to meaningful Sanskrit expressions and to English counterparts that the reader already knows deeply. And the learner doesn't need to memorize an awkward and ill-fitting term.

To put it simply, we make a distinction between *knowing* Sanskrit and *talking about* Sanskrit. *How* we talk about Sanskrit doesn't matter at all. What matters is that we communicate useful knowledge to the learner in a way that they can easily understand and internalize.

Core lessons

The Sanskrit language

Our **core lessons** will teach you about all of Sanskrit at a basic level. Together, these core lessons will help you build a strong tree trunk for the rest of your studies.

First, our lessons will focus on the Sanskrit sounds: what they are, how they are pronounced, and how they affect each other. We will then learn some of the *sound change rules* that Sanskrit often uses. Here is a simple example of a sound change rule:

कृष्णः न युध्यते → कृष्णो न युध्यते
kr̥ṣṇaḥ na yudhyate → *kr̥ṣṇo na yudhyate*
 Krishna does not fight.

(Don't worry about the details here; we will explain them later.)

Once we finish learning about Sanskrit's sounds and sound change rules, we will learn about basic Sanskrit sentences. We will also learn about the three *basic word types* that Sanskrit uses. First, we will learn about naming words like “Krishna”:

कृष्णो न युध्यते।
kr̥ṣṇo na yudhyate.
 Krishna does not fight.

Next, we will learn about action words like “fight”:

कृष्णो न युध्यते।
kr̥ṣṇo na yudhyate.
 Krishna does not **fight**.

Finally, we will learn about miscellaneous words like “not”:

कृष्णो न युध्यते।
kr̥ṣṇo na yudhyate.
 Krishna does **not** fight.

We will end our core lessons by learning how to *create* new words in Sanskrit. Here are some examples of the kinds of words we can create:

युज् + अ → योग

yuj + *a* → *yoga*

yoke, join, unite → yoking, junction, union; *yoga*

योग + इन् → योगिन्

yoga + *in* → *yogin*

yoga → characterized by yoga; *yogi*

कर्मन् + योग → कर्मयोग

karman + *yoga* → *karmayoga*

karma (action) + *yoga* → yoga of action; *karma yoga*

Together, these core lessons will give us a complete view of Sanskrit grammar. Once you finish these core lessons and know them well, you can explore the rest of our guide in whatever order you like.

Basic vowels

Sanskrit students traditionally begin their studies by learning about the different Sanskrit sounds. We will start our core lessons in the same way.

Why is it so important to study Sanskrit's sounds? It is because Sanskrit sounds often transform due to *sound change rules*. If we study Sanskrit's sounds closely, then we can better use and understand these sound change rules.

For that reason, half of our core lessons are about sounds: how to pronounce them, what they are like, and how they affect each other.

First, a note on scripts

A **script** is a way of writing down a language's sounds. In modern times, most people write Sanskrit in the **Devanagari** (देवनागरी) script. In the West, many people also use **romanized** Sanskrit, which uses an extended version of the Latin alphabet.

Most of the Sanskrit in our guide is written in both Devanagari and in romanized Sanskrit. You can use a different script by accessing our online guide at learnsanskrit.org/guide.

If you don't know Devanagari and want to learn it, see the [Devanagari topic](#) in our guide. But before you do, we recommend that you finish the core lessons.

How do we make different sounds?

When we speak, a stream of air flows out of our lungs and through our mouth and nose. If we move our tongue, our lips, and other parts of our mouth, we can modify this flow of air and create different sounds.

Simple and open sounds like “a” and “o” are called **vowels**. When we pronounce them, our breath flows straight out of our mouths. And by moving our tongue and lips, we can create different vowel sounds: “Aaa! Eee! Ooo!”

The first Sanskrit vowel is *a*. *a* is a simple and relaxed sound:

अ
a

We're still adding audio to the new version of our guide. For now, you can listen to all of these sounds through [this resource](#) from the University of British Columbia.

Points of pronunciation

If we change the position of our tongue and lips, we can modify the basic vowel *a* and create other vowels.

How might we modify this sound? One way is by changing the **point of pronunciation** we use. Sanskrit sounds use five basic points of pronunciation, and you can see all five of them marked in the image below:



From right to left, these points are:

- the **soft palate**, which is the soft and fleshy area at the back of your mouth
- the **hard palate**, which is the hard and bony area that is sometimes called the “roof” of our mouth

- the edge of the roof of the mouth, near the “hard bump” near our teeth
- the base of our teeth
- the lips

When we pronounce *a*, our tongue rests near our soft palate:

अ
a

But if we change where our tongue rests in our mouth, we can create different vowel sounds. For example, we can move the middle of our tongue closer to the hard palate:

इ
i

Or the tip of our tongue might rest near the bump on the roof of our mouth:

ऋ
r̥

Or the tip might rest near the base of the teeth:

लृ
l̥

Or we might use our lips instead:

उ
u

By using these five points of pronunciation, we create five different vowel sounds. And by changing our pronunciation in other ways, we can create many other kinds of sounds.

In Sanskrit's early history, people pronounced the sounds *r* and *l* in a simple way. Today, people in different regions pronounce them in different styles. So, you might hear many different pronunciations for these vowels.

Review

In the next lesson, we'll combine the basic vowels above and create a variety of different sounds.

1. What are the five points of pronunciation?
2. What are the five vowels that we learned about in this lesson?

1. soft palate, hard palate, edge of roof of mouth, teeth, lips

The five points are also known as follows :

Guttarals	Palatals	Cerebrals	Dentals	Labials
कण्ठ्य	तालव्य	मूर्ध्य	दन्त्य	ओष्ठ्य

2. अ इ ऋ ए उ, in the same order as above

Short and long vowels

In the previous lesson, we learned about five basic vowels:

अ
a

इ
i

ऋ
r

ऌ
l

उ
u

These five vowels are like different ingredients in a kitchen. By combining ingredients in different ways, we can create all kinds of new flavors. And by combining vowels in different ways, we can create all kinds of new sounds.

In this lesson, we will learn about some of the new sounds we can create by combining the basic vowels above.

Doubling a vowel

Suppose we are drinking tea and want to make our tea sweeter. What is the difference between adding one spoon of sugar and adding two? With one spoonful, our tea will be sweet. With two spoonfuls, our tea will be very sweet!

In the same way, what if we combine *a* and *a* together? We get a new sound that has the same basic flavor as *a* but in a more intense form. We get the vowel *ā*:

आ
ā

ā is pronounced for twice as much time as *a*. For this reason, *ā* is called a **long** vowel, and *a* is called a **short** vowel.

ह्रस्व

दीर्घ

We will study many different sound combinations in our guide. So let's use this simple format to describe them:

अ + अ → आ

a + a → ā

To the left of the arrow, you can see the two sounds that we combine (a and a). To the right, you can see our result (\bar{a}). You can read this rule as “ a and a combine to make \bar{a} .”

Can we combine the other vowels we've seen so far? Yes, we can:

इ + इ → ई

$i + i \rightarrow \bar{i}$

ऋ + ऋ → ॠ

$r + r \rightarrow \bar{r}$

उ + उ → ऊ

$u + u \rightarrow \bar{u}$

l is very rare in Sanskrit, and it does not have a long version. So in total, these combinations give us four new long vowels:

आ

\bar{a}

ई

\bar{i}

ॠ

\bar{r}

ऊ

\bar{u}

Combining long vowels

What happens if we try the combinations below? Do we get an “extra long” \bar{a} ?

अ + अ → आ

$a + a \rightarrow \bar{a}$

अ + आ → ?

$a + \bar{a} \rightarrow ?$

आ + अ → ?

$\bar{a} + a \rightarrow ?$

आ + आ → ?

$\bar{a} + \bar{a} \rightarrow ?$

No, we don't get an “extra long” \bar{a} . All of these combinations give us \bar{a} again:

$$\text{अ} + \text{अ} \rightarrow \text{आ}$$

$$a + a \rightarrow \bar{a}$$

$$\text{अ} + \text{आ} \rightarrow \text{आ}$$

$$a + \bar{a} \rightarrow \bar{a}$$

$$\text{आ} + \text{अ} \rightarrow \text{आ}$$

$$\bar{a} + a \rightarrow \bar{a}$$

$$\text{आ} + \text{आ} \rightarrow \text{आ}$$

$$\bar{a} + \bar{a} \rightarrow \bar{a}$$

To save space and make the pattern clear, let's write down all four of these changes like so:

$$(\text{अ}, \text{आ}) + (\text{अ}, \text{आ}) \rightarrow \text{आ}$$

$$(a, \bar{a}) + (a, \bar{a}) \rightarrow \bar{a}$$

Here, (a, \bar{a}) means “ a or \bar{a} .” So you can read this rule as “ a or \bar{a} combines with another a or \bar{a} to create \bar{a} .”

Likewise, here are the rules for the other vowels:

$$(\text{इ}, \text{ई}) + (\text{इ}, \text{ई}) \rightarrow \text{ई}$$

$$(i, \bar{i}) + (i, \bar{i}) \rightarrow \bar{i}$$

$$(\text{ऋ}, \text{ॠ}) + (\text{ऋ}, \text{ॠ}) \rightarrow \text{ॠ}$$

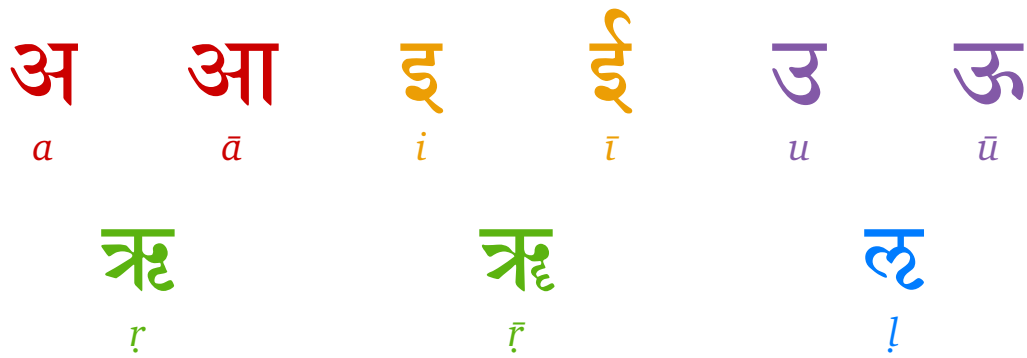
$$(r, \bar{r}) + (r, \bar{r}) \rightarrow \bar{r}$$

$$(\text{उ}, \text{ऊ}) + (\text{उ}, \text{ऊ}) \rightarrow \text{ऊ}$$

$$(u, \bar{u}) + (u, \bar{u}) \rightarrow \bar{u}$$

Review

We have now seen the first nine Sanskrit vowels. Here they are in their traditional order:



In the next lesson, we will continue to combine these vowels in different ways and create new sounds. Now, here are a few review questions:

1. Which vowels are short? Which vowels are long?
2. What do we get when we combine \bar{a} and \bar{a} ? $\text{आ} + \text{आ} = \text{आ}$
3. What do we get when we combine i and i ? $\text{इ} + \text{इ} = \text{ई}$

Semivowels

Just as we can combine sugar and salt to make new flavors, we can combine vowels that use *different* points of pronunciation to make new sounds.

If the first vowel is not *a* or *ā*, then it becomes a special shortened form. For example, *i* or *ī* might change like this:

(इ, ई) + अ → य

(i, ī) + a → ya

(इ, ई) + आ → या

(i, ī) + ā → yā

And likewise for *yu*, *yū*, *yr*, *yṛ*, and *yl*. We can make similar combinations with the other vowels:

(इ, ई) + अ → य

(i, ī) + a → ya

(ऋ, ॠ) + अ → र

(r, ṛ) + a → ra

लृ + अ → ल

l + a → la

(उ, ऊ) + अ → व

(u, ū) + a → va

And likewise if the second vowel is not *a*.

Together, these combinations give us four new sounds:

य
ya

र
ra

ल
la

व
va

Why do we add *a* to all of these sounds? We add *a* so that we can pronounce these sounds more easily. At the same time, adding *a* lets us create convenient names for these sounds. For example, we can talk about the sound *ya*, the sound *ra*, and so on.

These new sounds are similar to vowels, but they behave a little differently from the vowels we've seen. So, they are called **semivowels**. Each semivowel uses a different point of pronunciation:

- *ya* is pronounced at the same point as *i* and *ī*.
- *ra* is pronounced at the same point as *r* and *ṛ*.
- *la* is pronounced at the same point as *l*.
- *va* is pronounced at the same point as *u* and *ū*.

Semivowels are a part of a larger group of sounds called **consonants**. We will learn more about consonants in a future lesson.

Review

In the next lesson, we will complete our study of the Sanskrit vowels. For review, see if you can combine the sounds below correctly:

ई + उ → ? यु

$\bar{i} + u \rightarrow ?$

ऋ + ई → ? री

$\bar{r} + \bar{i} \rightarrow ?$

लृ + ए → ? ले

$l + e \rightarrow ?$

उ + आ → ? वा

$u + \bar{a} \rightarrow ?$

Compound vowels

In the previous lesson, we learned how vowels combine if the first vowel is not *a* or *ā*. In those situations, the first vowel becomes a semivowel:

$$\text{इ} + \text{अ} \rightarrow \text{य}$$

$$i + a \rightarrow ya$$

But what *does* happen if the first vowel is *a* or *ā*?

$$(\text{अ}, \text{आ}) + \text{इ} \rightarrow ?$$

$$(a, \bar{a}) + i \rightarrow ?$$

In this lesson, we will learn what happens and complete our basic picture of the Sanskrit vowels.

e and *o*

a and *ā* combine well with other vowels. So when *a* or *ā* is the first vowel, we get these new combinations:

$$(\text{अ}, \text{आ}) + (\text{इ}, \text{ई}) \rightarrow \text{ए}$$

$$(a, \bar{a}) + (i, \bar{i}) \rightarrow e$$

$$(\text{अ}, \text{आ}) + (\text{उ}, \text{ऊ}) \rightarrow \text{ओ}$$

$$(a, \bar{a}) + (u, \bar{u}) \rightarrow o$$

$$(\text{अ}, \text{आ}) + (\text{ऋ}, \text{ॠ}) \rightarrow \text{अर्}$$

$$(a, \bar{a}) + (r, \bar{r}) \rightarrow ar$$

$$(\text{अ}, \text{आ}) + \text{लृ} \rightarrow \text{अल्}$$

$$(a, \bar{a}) + l \rightarrow al$$

r and *l* are semivowels, and we have seen them already. But *e* and *o* are new sounds:

ए
e

ओ
o

e and *o* are called **compound vowels**, since they are compounds of two different vowel sounds. Compound vowels are always *long* vowels. All of the other vowels we've seen are called **simple vowels**, and these simple vowels can be either short (like *a*) or long (like *ā*).

ai* and *au

Can we combine *a* with these new sounds again? Yes, we can:

(अ, आ) + ए → ऐ
(*a, ā*) + *e* → *ai*

(अ, आ) + ओ → औ
(*a, ā*) + *o* → *au*

(अ, आ) + अर् → आर्
(*a, ā*) + *ar* → *ār*

(अ, आ) + अल् → आल्
(*a, ā*) + *al* → *āl*

ai and *au* are also compound vowels, and they are also long:

ऐ
ai

औ
au

Can we combine *a* with these sounds once more? We can, but the result is the same. There are no more sounds we can create:

(अ, आ) + ऐ → ऐ
(*a, ā*) + *ai* → *ai*

(अ, आ) + औ → औ

$(a, \bar{a}) + au \rightarrow au$

(अ, आ) + आर् → आर्

$(a, \bar{a}) + \bar{a}r \rightarrow \bar{a}r$

(अ, आ) + आल् → आल्

$(a, \bar{a}) + \bar{a}l \rightarrow \bar{a}l$

Combining compound vowels

We have seen almost all of the different ways that Sanskrit vowels combine with each other. But there is one loose end. What if the first vowel is a compound vowel?

If the first vowel is a compound vowel, then we usually see the following changes:

ए + अ → अय् अ

$e + a \rightarrow ay a$

ऐ + अ → आय् अ

$ai + a \rightarrow \bar{a}y a$

ओ + अ → अव् अ

$o + a \rightarrow av a$

औ + अ → आव् अ

$au + a \rightarrow \bar{a}v a$

And likewise if the second vowel is not *a*.

If these changes feel strange to you, it might help to remember where the compound vowels come from. For example, the compound vowel *e* comes from the vowels *a* and *i*. So when *e* is followed by some other vowel, it's as if the *i* sound becomes the semivowel *y*:

ए + अ → अ + इ + अ

$e + a \rightarrow a + i + a$

अ + इ + अ → अय् अ

$a + i + a \rightarrow ay a$

We can think about *ai* in the same way:

ऐ + अ → अ + अ + इ + अ

$ai + a \rightarrow a + a + i + a$

अ + अ + इ + अ → आय् अ

$a + a + i + a \rightarrow \bar{a}y a$

But if thinking about the vowels this way is too confusing, you can just memorize the four changes above. We repeat them here for convenience:

ए + अ → अय् अ

$e + a \rightarrow ay a$

ऐ + अ → आय् अ

$ai + a \rightarrow \bar{a}y a$

ओ + अ → अव् अ

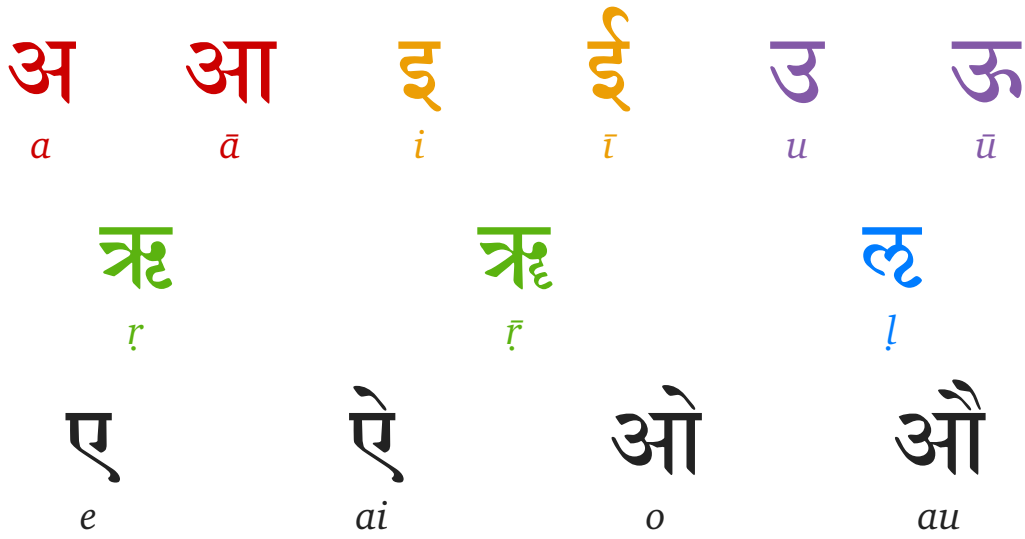
$o + a \rightarrow av a$

औ + अ → आव् अ

$au + a \rightarrow \bar{a}v a$

Review

We have now seen all of the fundamental Sanskrit vowels. Here they are in their traditional order:



In the next lesson, we will learn about *consonants*. But before that, here are a few review questions:

1. Which vowels are short? Which vowels are long?
अ इ ऋ लृ उ आ ई ॠ ऊ
2. Which vowels are compound vowels?
ए ऐ ओ औ
3. What do we get when we combine *o* and *i*? ओ + इ = अव् इ
4. What do we get when we combine *au* and *e*? औ + ए = अ + ओ + अ + इ
= आव् अय्

Consonants

In the previous lessons, we learned about the Sanskrit vowels and how they combine with each other. In this lesson, we will learn about a new type of sound: the **consonant**. For example, the semivowels we saw in the previous lesson (*ya*, *ra*, *la*, *va*) are all consonants.

We create consonants by disturbing the clean flow of air through the mouth. If we use the different points of pronunciation and touch them in different ways, we can create many new consonant sounds.

The first 25 consonants

When we make sounds like “k” and “p,” the flow of air through our mouths stops completely. We pronounce the first 25 Sanskrit consonants by *stopping* the flow of air through the mouth.

For example, we can create the sound *k* by touching the base of the tongue to the soft palate. We call this sound *ka*, because *ka* is easier to pronounce than just *k*:

क
ka

ka is pronounced when the flow of air continues in a gentle way. If it continues in a forceful way with extra air, we create a new sound *kha*:

ख
kha

kha is called an **aspirated** sound, and *ka* is called an **unaspirated** sound. (The word “aspirated” just means “with extra breath,” and it is related to words like “respire” and “inspire.”). When we change how we use our breath, we change the basic sound *ka* to create something new.

But we can make other changes besides just changing our breathing. If you touch your fingers to your throat and pronounce the sounds “sss” and “zzz,” you can feel your throat and vocal cords vibrate. This vibration is called **voicing**.

Sounds like “s” don't use voicing, so they are called **unvoiced** sounds. Meanwhile, sounds like “z” *do* use voicing, so they are likewise called **voiced** sounds. All of the vowels we have seen are also voiced sounds. And just as we have the *unvoiced* consonants *ka* and *kha*, we have the *voiced* consonants *ga* and *gha*:

ग
ga

घ
gha

We can also make sounds by *redirecting* the flow of air. If we redirect this flow of air through our nose, we create the sound *ṇa*. Since we pronounce *ṇa* with the help of the nose, it is called a **nasal** consonant:

፡
ṇa

So from just the soft palate, we get five new consonant sounds:

क
ka

ख
kha

ग
ga

घ
gha

፡
ṇa

Now, what happens if we use the hard palate instead of the soft palate? We get five more consonants:

च
ca

छ
cha

ज
ja

झ
jha

ञ
ṇa

What if the tip of the tongue touches the hard bump on the roof of the mouth?
Then we get five more consonants:

ट

ṭa

ठ

ṭha

ड

ḍa

ढ

ḍha

ण

ṇa

And likewise when the tip of the tongue touches the base of the teeth:

त

ta

थ

tha

द

da

ध

dha

न

na

Or when the lips touch:

प

pa

फ

pha

ब

ba

भ

bha

म

ma

By using the five points of pronunciation, we have created 25 different consonant sounds. Let's consider all 25 of these sounds together:

क <i>ka</i>	ख <i>kha</i>	ग <i>ga</i>	घ <i>gha</i>	ङ <i>ṅa</i>
च <i>ca</i>	छ <i>cha</i>	ज <i>ja</i>	झ <i>jha</i>	ञ <i>ña</i>
ट <i>ṭa</i>	ठ <i>ṭha</i>	ड <i>ḍa</i>	ढ <i>ḍha</i>	ण <i>ṇa</i>
त <i>ta</i>	थ <i>tha</i>	द <i>da</i>	ध <i>dha</i>	न <i>na</i>
प <i>pa</i>	फ <i>pha</i>	ब <i>ba</i>	भ <i>bha</i>	म <i>ma</i>

These sounds form a grid with five rows and five columns. The sounds in each row use the same point of pronunciation. And the sounds in each column have similar properties:

- All the sounds in the first two columns (the *ka* and *kha* columns) are unvoiced, and the others are voiced.
- All of the sounds in the second and fourth columns (the *kha* and *gha* columns) are aspirated, and the others are unaspirated.
- All of the sounds in the fifth column (*ṅa ṇa ṇa na ma*) are nasal consonants.

This simple scheme, which is almost 3000 years old, lets us quickly understand how the different consonant sounds relate to each other.

The other consonants

We have just a few more consonants to examine.

Instead of stopping the flow of air, we can just *constrict* it. If we do so, we get the semivowels, which we saw in a previous lesson:

य
ya

र
ra

ल
la

व
va

ra has a rougher sound similar to what you might hear in Hindi or Spanish. And *va* is pronounced like a mix of the English “v” and “w” sounds.

We can also disturb the flow of air to make a *hissing* sound. If we do so, we can make three new sounds: *śa* at the hard palate, *ṣa* at the roof, and *sa* at the teeth. All three of these sounds are unvoiced:

श
śa

ष
ṣa

स
sa

And finally, we can make a *voiced* hissing sound by using the soft palate:

ह
ha

We have now seen all of the standard Sanskrit consonants. Here they are in their traditional order:

क <i>ka</i>	ख <i>kha</i>	ग <i>ga</i>	घ <i>gha</i>	ङ <i>ṅa</i>
च <i>ca</i>	छ <i>cha</i>	ज <i>ja</i>	झ <i>jha</i>	ञ <i>ña</i>
ट <i>ṭa</i>	ठ <i>ṭha</i>	ड <i>ḍa</i>	ढ <i>ḍha</i>	ण <i>ṇa</i>
त <i>ta</i>	थ <i>tha</i>	द <i>da</i>	ध <i>dha</i>	न <i>na</i>
प <i>pa</i>	फ <i>pha</i>	ब <i>ba</i>	भ <i>bha</i>	म <i>ma</i>
य <i>ya</i>	र <i>ra</i>	ल <i>la</i>	व <i>va</i>	
श <i>śa</i>	ष <i>ṣa</i>	स <i>sa</i>	ह <i>ha</i>	

In Devanagari, consecutive consonants are written in an unusual way. For details, see our [lesson on consonant clusters](#).

Review

We have seen almost all of the sounds used in normal Sanskrit. In the next lesson, we'll study two more sounds and complete our study of the Sanskrit alphabet.

1. What point of pronunciation does *ja* use? What about *da*?
ज = तालव्य द = दन्त्य
2. Which consonants are nasal sounds? ङ ञ ण न म
3. Is *ya* a vowel or a consonant? य is a semivowel/consonant
4. Is *śa* voiced or unvoiced? What about *ha*? श is unvoiced, ह is voiced

anusvāra and *visarga*

In this lesson, we will learn about the last two sounds in the Sanskrit alphabet. These sounds often change when other sounds follow them. But with what we have learned so far, we can easily understand these sounds and their changes.

anusvāra

The first sound we will study is called the *anusvāra* (“after-sound”):

अं
aṁ

(We’ve added *a* before the *anusvāra* to make it easier to pronounce.)

The *anusvāra* has its own distinct pronunciation. But often, its written form is used as a kind of “shorthand” for nasal sounds followed by a consonant. In each example below, we should pronounce the word on the left in the same way as the word on the right:

संगः → सङ्गः

saṅgaḥ → saṅgaḥ

संजयः → सञ्जयः

saṁjayaḥ → sañjayaḥ

संन्यासः → सन्न्यासः

saṁnyāsaḥ → sannyaśaḥ

संबन्धः → सम्बन्धः

saṁbandhaḥ → sambandhaḥ

If you would like to read more about the *anusvāra*, we recommend [this short monograph](#) by Shriramana Sharma.

visarga

The next sound is called the *visarga* (“release”):

अः
aḥ

(As with the *anusvāra*, we've added *a* before the *visarga* to make it easier to pronounce.)

Generally, the *visarga* is pronounced like the “h” in “house.” It is pronounced at the soft palate.

In modern times, however, the *visarga* is often pronounced like an “echo” of the previous vowel when it is at the end of a phrase. So *aḥ* is pronounced like *aha*, *ūḥ* is pronounced like *ūhu*, *aiḥ* is pronounced like *aihi*, and so on.

The Sanskrit alphabet

Here is the standard Sanskrit alphabet in order. First are the simple vowels:

अ	आ	इ	ई	उ	ऊ
<i>a</i>	<i>ā</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>ī</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>ū</i>
ऋ	ॠ	ऌ			
<i>ṛ</i>	<i>ṝ</i>	<i>ḷ</i>			

Then the compound vowels:

ए	ऐ	ओ	औ
<i>e</i>	<i>ai</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>au</i>

Then the *anusvāra* and *visarga*:

अं
am

अः
aḥ

Then the consonants:

क
ka

ख
kha

ग
ga

घ
gha

ङ
ṅa

च
ca

छ
cha

ज
ja

झ
jha

ञ
ña

ट
ṭa

ठ
ṭha

ड
ḍa

ढ
ḍha

ण
ṇa

त
ta

थ
tha

द
da

ध
dha

न
na

प
pa

फ
pha

ब
ba

भ
bha

म
ma

य
ya

र
ra

ल
la

व
va

श
śa

ष
ṣa

स
sa

ह
ha

In the list above, we have colored each letter according to the point of pronunciation it uses. Letters that use two points of pronunciation are left black. The

anusvāra is also left black, since it doesn't use any of these points of pronunciation.

Technically, *va* uses two points of pronunciation, since it uses the upper teeth and the lower lip. But for conceptual clarity, we have colored it like *pa* and the others.

Review

Now we have seen all of the sounds used in normal Sanskrit. Our kitchen of sounds is well-stocked and ready for use.

1. What is the sound *aḥ* called? What is the sound *aṁ* called?
2. In modern times, how is *auḥ* often pronounced at the end of a sentence? *auḥu*
3. How is *saṁcaya* usually pronounced? How about *saṁbodhi*?

saṁcaya

saṁbodhi

Syllables

Syllables are groups of sounds that we pronounce as one unit. For example, a word like “beginners” has three syllables (“be-gin-ners”). Now that we know about the basic Sanskrit sounds, let's learn more about syllables.

Why learn about syllables? First, knowing about syllables helps us have good pronunciation. Second, some of Sanskrit's rules are easier to understand if we know how syllables work.

How to split a phrase into syllables

In Sanskrit, each syllable has exactly one vowel:

योग → यो ग

yoga → *yo ga*

yoga

व्याकरण → व्या क र ण

vyākaraṇa → *vyā ka ra ṇa*

grammar

Traditionally, each syllable should end in a vowel:

धर्म → ध र्म

dharma → *dha rma*

dharma

क्षेत्र → क्षे त्र

kṣetra → *kṣe tra*

field

And the *anusvāra* and *visarga* are in the same syllable as the vowel they follow:

संस्कृत → सं स्कु त

saṃskṛta → *saṃ skṛ ta*

Sanskrit

दुःख → दुः ख
duḥkha → *duḥ kha*
 difficulty, suffering

If there are any other sounds at the end of our phrase, we include them in the last syllable:

सुखम् → सु खम्
sukham → *su kham*
 ease, pleasure

वृक्षात् → वृ क्षात्
vṛkṣāt → *vṛ kṣāt*
 from the tree

To better understand these rules, let's read the first verse of the *Bhagavad Gita*, which you can listen to [here](#). Here is the first half of the verse:

धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे समवेता युयुत्सवः ।
dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre samavetā yuyutsavaḥ ।

We split this into syllables like so:

धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे → ध र्म क्षे त्रे कु रु क्षे त्रे
dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre → *dha rma kṣe tre ku ru kṣe tre*

समवेता युयुत्सवः → स म वे ता यु यु त्स वः
samavetā yuyutsavaḥ → *sa ma ve tā yu yu tsa vaḥ*

Devanagari: a syllable script

In the examples above, notice how cleanly each Devanagari word separates into different syllables. Each “unit” of Devanagari is its own syllable according to the rules above.

Light and heavy syllables

There are two kinds of syllables: **light** and **heavy**. We usually pronounce heavy syllables for *twice as much time* as light syllables.

Which syllables are light, and which are heavy? Generally, these syllables are heavy:

- Syllables with long vowels.
- Syllables that are followed by multiple consonants.
- Syllables that are followed by the *anusvāra* or *visarga*.

And all other syllables are light.

In the example below, the red syllables are heavy and the black ones are light. As you read through this example, try to explain why each syllable is light or heavy:

ध र्म क्षे त्रे कुरु क्षे त्रे

dha rma kṣe tre ku ru kṣe tre

ध र्म and रु is followed by mixture of consonants.
So they are large. For others, it is clear.

स म वे ता यु यु त्स वः

sa ma ve tā yu yu tsa vaḥ

Same as above

Review

If you pronounce light and heavy syllables correctly, your Sanskrit pronunciation will be sharp and clear.

If you would like to practice identifying syllables, you can try dividing the lines below. The first line is from the *Puruṣasūktam*, which you can listen to [here](#):

सहस्रशीर्षा पुरुषः सहस्राक्षः सहस्रपात्

sahasraśīrṣā puruṣaḥ sahasrākṣaḥ sahasrapāt

heavy syllables are circled here

The next line is from the *Veṅkaṭasuprabhātam*, which you can listen to [here](#):

मातः समस्तजगतां मधुकैटभारः

mātaḥ samastajagatāṃ madhukaiṭabhāreḥ

heavy syllables are circled here

And the last line is from the *Mahīṣāsuramardinistotram*, which you can listen to [here](#):

अयि गिरिनन्दिनि नन्दितमेदिनि विश्वविनोदिनि नन्दिनुते
 ayi girinandini nanditamedini viśvavinodini nandinute

heavy syllables are circled here

Sandhi

When we speak quickly, we make many kinds of small and subconscious changes to the way we speak. These small changes let us speak more quickly and smoothly. For example, some native English speakers will not pronounce the final “g” sound of words like “walking” and “going.”

These kinds of sound changes also occur in Sanskrit. Here is a simple example:

सीता अश्वम् इच्छति → सीताश्वम् इच्छति

sītā aśvam icchati → sītāśvam icchati

Sita wants a horse.

When we speak quickly, it is difficult to pause after the *ā* in *sītā* and start again with the first *a* of *aśvam*. By combining these two vowels into a single sound, our speech remains fast and smooth.

In Sanskrit, these sound changes are called **sandhi**, which means “joining” or “junction.” Sandhi refers to what happens at the *junction* of different sounds.

Every language has its own sandhi changes. But Sanskrit sandhi is unusual because it is often written down. For example, the Sanskrit words *gajo* and *gajas* have exactly the same meaning, but we use *gajo* in front of some sounds and *gajas* in front of others:

गजो नगरं गच्छति ।

gajo nagaram gacchati.

The elephant goes to the village.

गजस् तरुं गच्छति ।

gajas taruṃ gacchati.

The elephant goes to the tree.

Why are sandhi changes written down in Sanskrit? Sanskrit speakers cared about the power of spoken language. Writing, when it was used at all, was meant to preserve the sound of spoken Sanskrit. So since sandhi changes appear in spoken Sanskrit, they usually appear in written Sanskrit too.

In this lesson, we'll learn a few basic sandhi rules. Studying these rules will also help us build up our awareness of different Sanskrit sounds.

The basic principle of sandhi

This is the basic principle of sandhi:

Generally, sandhi makes it easier to speak quickly and smoothly.

If you remember this basic principle, you can save yourself hours of time. In fact, this principle is so important that we will say it twice:

Generally, sandhi makes it easier to speak quickly and smoothly.

We urge you to read the examples below *out loud*. Read them slowly, and read them quickly. Notice which sounds are easy to say and which are difficult. Over time, your mind and body will develop an intuition for how sandhi changes should feel.

Vowel sandhi

Vowel sandhi is the name for sandhi rules between two vowels.

Actually, we have studied most of vowel sandhi already. When we studied the different vowel combinations, what we were really studying were vowel sandhi rules. As a reminder, here are some examples of vowel sandhi:

सीता अश्वम् इच्छति → सीताश्वम् इच्छति

sītā aśvam icchati → sītāśvam icchati

Sita wants a horse.

सीता इषुम् इच्छति → सीतेषुम् इच्छति

sītā iṣum icchati → sīteṣum icchati

Sita wants an arrow.

सीता एतम् इच्छति → सीतैतम् इच्छति

sītā etam icchati → sītaitam icchati

Sita wants this.

सीता उदकम् इच्छति → सीतोदकम् इच्छति

sītā udakam icchati → sītodakam icchati

Sita wants water.

सीता ओदनम् इच्छति → सीतौदनम् इच्छति

sītā odanam icchati → sītaudanam icchati

Sita wants rice.

And a few more with a different first vowel:

शबरी अश्वम् इच्छति → शबर्य् अश्वम् इच्छति

śabarī aśvam icchati → śabary aśvam icchati

Shabari wants a horse.

शबरी इषुम् इच्छति → शबरीषुम् इच्छति

śabarī iṣum icchati → śabarīṣum icchati

Shabari wants an arrow.

शबरी ओदनम् इच्छति → शबर्य् ओदनम् इच्छति

śabarī odanam icchati → śabary odanam icchati

Shabari wants rice.

visarga sandhi

visarga sandhi is the name for sandhi changes where the first sound is the *visarga*. For now, we will give some basic examples of *visarga sandhi*.

One common change is that the *visarga* becomes *śa* if followed by the letters *ca* or *cha*:

गजाः चरन्ति → गजाश् चरन्ति ।

gajāḥ caranti → gajāś caranti.

The elephants walk.

and *sa* if followed by the letters *ta* or *tha*:

गजाः तिष्ठन्ति → गजास् तिष्ठन्ति ।

gajāḥ tiṣṭhanti → *gajās tiṣṭhanti*.

The elephants stand.

The idea is that the *visarga*, which is pronounced at the soft palate, changes to match the point of pronunciation used by *ca*, *cha*, *ta*, and *tha*. When these sounds match, we can pronounce them together more easily.

Another change is that the *visarga* disappears if a voiced sound follows it:

गजाः गच्छन्ति । → गजा गच्छन्ति ।

gajāḥ gacchanti. → *gajā gacchanti*.

The elephants go.

गजाः नदन्ति । → गजा नदन्ति ।

gajāḥ nadanti. → *gajā nadanti*.

The elephants roar.

गजाः आम्रम् पश्यन्ति । → गजा आम्रं पश्यन्ति ।

gajāḥ āmram paśyanti. → *gajā āmraṃ paśyanti*.

The elephants see a mango tree.

Just as a drop of water vanishes when it touches a hot pan, the unvoiced *visarga* vanishes when it touches a voiced sound. But one important exception is that *aḥ* becomes *o* if a voiced consonant follows:

रामः युध्यते → रामो युध्यते

rāmaḥ yudhyate → *rāmo yudhyate*

Rama fights.

रामः जयति → रामो जयति

rāmaḥ jayati → *rāmo jayati*

Rama conquers.

रामः हसति → रामो हसति

rāmaḥ hasati → rāmo hasati

Rama laughs.

There is a complex explanation for this change. But, it is faster and simpler to just memorize it.

Consonant sandhi

Consonant sandhi is the name for sandhi rules where the first sound is a consonant. Here we will give one small example of consonant sandhi. When the sound *m* is followed by a consonant, it becomes the *anusvāra*:

रामः सागरम् गच्छति → रामः सागरं गच्छति ।

rāmaḥ sāgaram gacchati → rāmaḥ sāgaraṁ gacchati.

Rama goes to the ocean.

रामः वनम् गच्छति → रामो वनं गच्छति ।

rāmaḥ vanam gacchati → rāmo vanaṁ gacchati.

Rama goes to the forest.

रामः चन्द्रम् गच्छति → रामश्चन्द्रं गच्छति ।

rāmaḥ candram gacchati → rāmaś candraṁ gacchati.

Rama goes to the moon.

Remember: the *anusvāra* is often used as a shorthand way to write down different nasal sounds. For example, the two sentences below are written differently, but they are often pronounced identically:

रामः सागरं गच्छति

rāmaḥ sāgaraṁ gacchati

रामः सागरङ् गच्छति ।

rāmaḥ sāgaraṅ gacchati.

If we keep this in mind, then we have the same principle as before: *m* changes to match the point of pronunciation used by the following sound. When both

sounds use the same point of pronunciation, we can pronounce them together more easily.

The *avagraha*

Finally, you may sometimes see this symbol when you read Sanskrit:

₣

This symbol is called the *avagraha*, and it is not pronounced.

The *avagraha* is similar to the **apostrophe** (') symbol that we use in English. In English, one of the ways we use the apostrophe is to show that a sound was removed. For example, the contraction “isn't” comes from “is not.” Here, the apostrophe in “isn't” shows that the “o” in “not” was removed.

In the same way, we use the *avagraha* in Sanskrit to show that a vowel (usually *a*) was removed due to sandhi. Here is a common change that uses the *avagraha*:

रामः अयोध्याम् गच्छति → रामो योध्यां गच्छति ।

rāmaḥ ayodhyām gacchati → *rāmo 'yodhyāṃ gacchati*.

Rama goes to Ayodhya.

The rule here is that if the *visarga* has an *a* on either side of it, all three sounds are replaced with *o*. Again, there is a complicated explanation for this change, but it is easier to just memorize it.

Different authors have their own preferences on whether to use the *avagraha* or not. So although it is useful, do not assume it will always be used.

Review

Most sandhi changes follow simple principles that are easy to understand. When in doubt, speak out loud. And if you want to learn much more about sandhi, see our *Sandhi* topic after you finish the core lessons.

1. Earlier in this this lesson, we wrote that most sandhi rules follow a basic principle that can save you a lot of time. What is that basic principle? *Easier to speak*
2. How does the phrase *kausalyā icchati* change due to sandhi? *कौसल्या इच्छति = कौसल्येच्छ ति*
3. How does the phrase *arjunaḥ tiṣṭhati* change due to sandhi? *अर्जुनः तिष्ठति = अर्जुनस्तिष्ठति*
4. How does the phrase *arjunaḥ gacchati* change due to sandhi? *अर्जुनो गच्छति*
5. How does the phrase *arjunaḥ vanam gacchati* change due to sandhi? *अर्जुनो वनं (वनङ्) गच्छति*

Sentences

So far, we have focused on the smallest parts of Sanskrit: its sounds. But rather than count every grain of rice, let's simply savor the meal in front of us. In this lesson, let's consider Sanskrit from a broader point of view and discuss some simple sentences.

Word order

Here is a simple Sanskrit sentence:

रामः सीतां पश्यति ।

rāmaḥ sītāṃ paśyati.

Rama sees Sita.

Rama and Sita are two of the main characters in the *Ramayana*, one of the ancient Sanskrit poems. For much of the *Ramayana*, Rama and Sita are far apart, and Rama searches desperately to find her. So it is a happy thing that Rama can see Sita at last.

Notice the **word order** in this sentence. The main action of the sentence is that one person is seeing another. The person who performs the action (*rāmaḥ*) is called the **subject**. The person who is affected by the action (*sītāṃ*) is called the **object**. And the word that describes the action (*paśyati*) is called the **verb**.

In English, the usual order of these three is subject, then verb, then object. So English is sometimes called a “subject-verb-object” (SVO) language. But Sanskrit does not work this way. Like many Indian languages, it tends to use a “subject-object-verb” (SOV) order.

Word endings

Rama sees Sita, but perhaps Sita wants to see Rama too. So let's add another sentence:

रामः सीतां पश्यति ।

rāmaḥ sītāṃ paśyati.

Rama sees Sita.

सीता रामं पश्यति ।

sītā rāmaṃ paśyati.

Sita sees Rama.

Here we notice something else. When Rama is the person seeing, we use the word *rāmaḥ*. But when Rama is the person being seen, we use the word *rāmam*. (*rāmam* becomes *rāmaṃ* due to sandhi.)

All languages express meaning in their own ways. In Sanskrit, one of the important ways we express different meanings is by changing a word. And usually, we change a word by changing its ending.

Different word endings can show whether someone is the subject of a sentence (*rāmaḥ*), the object of a sentence (*rāmam*), or even something else entirely:

सीता रामाय पश्यति ।

sītā rāmāya paśyati.

Sita sees **for** Rama.

सीता रामेण सह नगरं पश्यति ।

sītā rāmeṇa saha nagaram paśyati.

Sita sees the city **with** Rama.

सीता रामस्य पितरं पश्यति ।

sītā rāmasya pitaram paśyati.

Sita sees **Rama's** father.

English uses different word endings in a limited way. We see one *bird* but two *birds*; I *run* in a field but someone *runs* in a park. But Sanskrit words use many different kinds of word endings. Some endings are very simple, like the ones above. But other endings are more complex:

सीता रामं पश्यति ।

sītā rāmaṃ paśyati.

Sita **sees** Rama.

सीता रामं पश्येत् ।

sītā rāmaṃ paśyet.

Sita **might see** Rama.

सीता रामं पश्यतु ।

sītā rāmaṃ paśyatu.

May Sita **see** Rama.

Changing the word order

English uses word endings in a limited way, but the meaning of English sentences is still clear. Why? It is because English uses *word order* to make meaning clear. For example, “Sita sees Rama” and “Rama sees Sita” mean very different things. In English, word order is very important!

But Sanskrit already makes meaning clear through word endings. Does this mean we can change the word order in Sanskrit? Yes, we can. All of the examples below have the same meaning but use different word orders:

रामः सीतां पश्यति ।

rāmaḥ sītāṃ paśyati.

Rama sees Sita.

सीतां रामः पश्यति ।

sītāṃ rāmaḥ paśyati.

Rama sees Sita.

सीतां पश्यति रामः ।

sītāṃ paśyati rāmaḥ.

Rama sees Sita.

रामः पश्यति सीताम् ।

rāmaḥ paśyati sītām.

Rama sees Sita.

पश्यति सीतां रामः ।

paśyati sītāṃ rāmaḥ.

Rama sees Sita.

पश्यति रामः सीताम् ।

paśyati rāmaḥ sītām.

Rama sees Sita.

Sanskrit sentences generally follow the subject-object-verb order we described above. But word order can change dramatically depending on the context. Certain word orderings simply sound nicer than others, and some ideas are easier to understand depending on the order they appear in.

Review

Our *Sentences* topic contains more about Sanskrit sentences and how they work. But for now, let's change focus and learn more about the different kinds of Sanskrit words. In the next three lessons, we will learn about the three main word types that Sanskrit uses.

1. What order does Sanskrit tend to use for its subjects, verbs, and objects?
2. Why can we rearrange the words in a Sanskrit sentence?

subject object verb

The विभक्ति of the different SOVs already make the meaning clear irrespective of their order

Nominals

In the previous lesson, we learned about basic Sanskrit sentences. Sanskrit sentences use three main word types: verbs like *paśyati*, “naming” words like *rāmaḥ*, and a third type that we’ll study in a later lesson.

“Naming” words like *rāmaḥ* are called **nouns**. But Sanskrit has many other kinds of words that behave similarly to nouns. These include **adjectives**, which describe a noun:

कृष्णो गौः खादति ।

kr̥ṣṇo gauḥ khādati.

The **black** cow eats.

श्वेता स्वपिति ।

śvetā svapiti.

The **white** one sleeps.

सुखिनो गजाः पिबन्ति ।

sukhino gajāḥ pibanti.

The **happy** elephants drink.

pronouns, which replace a noun:

स खादति ।

sa khādati.

He eats.

सा स्वपिति ।

sā svapiti.

She sleeps.

ते पिबन्ति ।

te pibanti.

They drink.

and **numerals**, which tell us how many of something we have:

एको गौः खादति

eko gauḥ khādati

One cow eats.

एका स्वपिति ।

ekā svapiti.

One sleeps.

त्रयो गजाः पिबन्ति ।

trayo gajāḥ pibanti.

Three elephants drink.

For convenience, let's call all of these words **nominals**. “Nominal” is a word that means “name-like.” So a nominal is a word that is *like* a noun.

Stems and endings

Let's start our discussion with some simple nominal words:

रामः

rāmaḥ

Rama (as the subject of the sentence)

रामम्

rāmam

Rama (as the object of the sentence)

Each of these words has two parts. First, there is a simple core that expresses the main idea of “Rama”:

राम

rāma

Rama

Second, we have an ending that modifies this basic idea in some way:

राम + ः → रामः

rāma + ḥ → rāmaḥ

Rama (as the subject of the sentence)

राम + म् → रामम्

rāma + m → rāmam

Rama (as the object)

rāma is called a **stem**, and *ḥ* and *m* are called **endings**. Just as many flowers might grow from a single plant stem, many words might grow from the same word stem.

As you can see in the examples above, a nominal ending can show whether a word is the *subject* of the sentence or the *object* of the sentence. These endings can show other kinds of information too:

स रामाय फलं ददाति ।

sa rāmāya phalaṃ dadāti.

He gives a fruit **to Rama**.

स रामाद् बलवत्तरः ।

sa rāmād balavattaraḥ.

He is stronger **than Rama**.

Specifically, a nominal ending shows *three* basic kinds of information in Sanskrit. Let's learn more about what these three kinds of information are.

Gender

The first kind of information we get from a nominal ending is its **gender**. In the examples below, notice how the nominal ending changes. This change shows a change in the noun's gender:

गजः पश्यति ।

gajāḥ paśyati.

The **(male)** elephant sees.

गजा पश्यति ।

gajā paśyati.

The (female) elephant sees.

Word gender is similar to our real-world concept of male and female genders. Usually, male-gendered beings use a **masculine** gender and female-gendered beings use a **feminine** gender. Sanskrit also has a **neuter** gender that is neither male nor female:

एतत् फलम् ।

etat phalam.

This is a fruit.

Each Sanskrit noun has its own gender. If a noun refers to a person or animal, we can usually guess the noun's gender. But when a noun does *not* refer to a person or animal, it can be hard to guess what the gender should be. For example, consider the nouns below. None of these genders is obvious:

वृक्ष

vrkṣa

tree (masculine)

फल

phala

fruit (neuter)

अग्नि

agni

fire (masculine)

कीर्ति

kīrti

glory (feminine)

नदी

nadī

river (feminine)

सेनानी

senānī

army leader (masculine)

Fortunately, we can usually guess a noun's gender by examining how its stem ends. We'll explain this more in a later lesson.

Number

The second kind of information we get from a nominal ending is its **number**. Simply, “number” is the number of items the nominal refers to. It might refer to one item, which is called the **singular**:

गजः पश्यति ।

gajāḥ paśyati.

The **(one)** elephant sees.

To two items, which is called the **dual**:

गजौ पश्यतः ।

gajau paśyataḥ.

The **two** elephants see.

Or to more than two items, which is called the **plural**:

गजाः पश्यन्ति ।

gajāḥ paśyanti.

The **(many)** elephants see.

Notice that the verb *paśyati* changes when the number of the noun changes. Verbs like *paśyati* have number as well. Usually, the verb's number and the subject's number should match.

Case

The third kind of information we get from a nominal ending is its **case**. “Case” is a technical word that is hard to define. Roughly, a word's *case* is the role that the word plays in the sentence.

Sanskrit uses eight different cases. **Case 1** is usually the subject of the action:

सिंहः पश्यति ।

siṃhaḥ paśyati.

The lion sees.

Case 2 is usually the object:

सिंहो ग्रामं पश्यति ।

siṃho grāmaṃ paśyati.

The lion sees a village.

Case 3 usually means “by means of”:

सिंहो मार्गेण ग्रामं गच्छति ।

siṃho mārgēṇa grāmaṃ gacchati.

The lion goes to the village by means of the road.

Case 4 usually means “for”:

सिंहो मांसाय ग्रामं गच्छति ।

siṃho māṃsāya grāmaṃ gacchati.

The lion goes to the village for meat.

Case 5 usually means “from”:

सिंहो वनाद् ग्रामं गच्छति ।

siṃho vanād grāmaṃ gacchati.

The lion goes from the forest to the village.

Case 6 usually means “of”:

सिंहो ग्रामस्य नरान् खादति ।

siṃho grāmasya narān khādati.

The lion eats the men of the village (or, the village's men).

Case 7 usually means “on” or “in”:

सिंहो ग्रामे चरति ।

siṃho grāme carati.

The lion walks in the village.

And case 8 is the person being spoken to:

हे सिंह वनं गच्छ ।

he siṃha vanam gaccha.

Hey lion! Go to the forest.

Using adjectives

In Sanskrit, we can use adjectives without a noun:

कृष्णो गच्छति ।

kr̥ṣṇo gacchati.

The black one goes.

सुन्दराः खादन्ति ।

sundarāḥ khādanti.

The handsome ones eat.

If we do use a noun, the adjective must use the same gender, case, and number as the noun it describes:

कृष्णः खगः

kr̥ṣṇaḥ khagaḥ

black bird

कृष्णौ खगौ

kr̥ṣṇau khagau

two black birds

कृष्णाः खगाः

kr̥ṣṇāḥ khagāḥ

(many) black birds

रामः कृष्णं खगं पश्यति ।

rāmaḥ kṛṣṇam khagaṁ paśyati.

Rama sees a black bird.

More technically, we can say that an adjective must **agree** with the noun it describes.

Review

Nominal words are one of the three main types of Sanskrit words. In the next lesson, we'll learn about the second main type: verbs like *paśyati* and *carati*.

1. Nominal words have two basic parts. What are those two basic parts? ^{stem and ending}
2. What are the three genders? ^{Masculine, Feminine and Neutral}
3. What are the three numbers? ^{Singular, Dual and Plural}
4. Choose one of the eight cases and explain what it means.

Case 4 - चतुर्थी विभक्ति

It is used for "to/for"

For example : रामाय नमः - Salutations "to rāma"

गजः जलाय नदीं गच्छति - The elephant goes to the river "for water"

Verbs

In the previous lesson, we learned that there are three main types of Sanskrit words: verbs like *paśyati*, nominal words like *rāmaḥ*, and a third type that we'll study in the next lesson.

Verbs are the core of a Sanskrit sentence. In fact, we can make a complete sentence with just a single verb:

पश्यन्ति ।

paśyanti.

They see.

Roots, stems and endings

Let's start our discussion with some simple verbs:

नयन्ति

nayanti

They lead.

नयसि

nayasi

You lead.

नयामि

nayāmi

I lead.

Like nominals, verbs have two parts: a **stem** that carries the basic meaning of the verb and an **ending** that modifies this basic meaning. In the examples above, *naya* is the stem, and it has the basic sense of “leading.” By combining *naya* with endings like *-ti*, *-nti*, and *-āmi*, we create different kinds of verbs.

But we can go deeper than this. Consider the verbs below:

नय + न्ति → नयन्ति

naya + nti → nayanti

They lead.

नेष्य + न्ति → नेष्यन्ति

neṣya + nti → neṣyanti

They will lead.

नायय + न्ति → नाययन्ति

nāyaya + nti → nāyayanti

They make (someone) lead.

If we remove the *-nti* ending, we see three different stems: *naya*, *neṣya*, and *nāyaya*. All of them have slightly different meanings. But all of them have to do with “leading” something, and all of them start with similar sounds.

Thousands of years ago, the people who studied Sanskrit grammar thought about words like *nayanti*, *neṣyanti*, and *nāyayati* and considered them deeply. They decided that all of these words share a common element, *nī*, from which all of these stems arise.

nī is called a **verb root**. Just as flower stems grow from a shared root, verb stems grow from a verb root. The verb root is short, compact, and contains the basic meaning of the stems and verbs that grow from it:

नी → नय → नयन्ति

nī → naya → nayanti

lead → lead → They lead.

नी → नेष्य → नेष्यन्ति

nī → neṣya → neṣyanti

lead → will lead → They will lead.

नी → नायि → नाययन्ति

nī → nāyi → nāyayanti

lead → make lead → They make (someone) lead.

Not all verbs have a clear and obvious root. But most verbs do.

Creating new verb roots

Traditional grammar defines a list of around 2000 verb roots. But Sanskrit also provides a few ways to create new verb roots from existing ones. These **derived roots** modify the root's basic meaning in some way.

For example, if we add *i* to a verb root that means “X,” we create a new verb root that “make (someone) do X.” You can see some examples of this below.

नी → नायि → नाययन्ति

nī → *nāyi* → *nāyayanti*

lead → make lead → They make (someone) lead.

चर् → चारि → चारयन्ति

car → *cāri* → *cārayanti*

walk → make walk → They make (someone) walk.

Note that *i* causes the sounds in the root to change. These kinds of changes are common when we add sounds to verb roots.

We can even create roots by using different nominal words:

मूत्र → मूत्रयति

mūtra → *mūtrayati*

urine, pee → He pees.

We will learn more about all of these derived roots in a later lesson. But for now, let's focus on verb *endings* and the information they contain.

Person

Generally, verb endings express five kinds of basic information. The first is the verb's **person**. “I go” and “He goes” express the same idea, but each has a different perspective. This perspective is the *person* of the verb.

Like English, Sanskrit has three persons. In the traditional Sanskrit order, we have the **third person**:

नयति

nayati

(Someone) leads.

the **second person**:

नयसि

nayasi

You lead.

and the **first person**:

नयामि

nayāmi

I lead.

Number

The second kind of information is the verb's **number**, which is the same idea as a nominal's number. As before, we have the **singular**:

नयति

nayati

(Someone) leads.

the **dual**:

नयतः

nayataḥ

The two of them lead.

and the **plural**:

नयन्ति

nayanti

They all lead.

Tense-mood

The third kind of information is the verb's **tense-mood**. A verb's **tense** is just the time period a verb refers to:

नयति

nayati

someone leads

नेष्यति

neṣyati

someone will lead

नेता

netā

someone will (eventually) lead

अनयत्

anayat

someone led

अनैषीत्

anaiṣīt

someone (recently) led

निनाय

nināya

someone led (long ago)

And a verb's **mood** is the way the verb expresses that information:

नयेत्

nayet

someone might lead

नयतु

nayatu

(we command that) someone may lead

नीयात्

nīyāt

(we hope that) someone may lead

अनेष्यत्

aneṣyat

someone would lead or would have led

In Sanskrit, these two categories are usually combined, which is why we call them tense-moods. Sanskrit has *ten* different tense-moods combinations, and you can see all ten of them in the examples above.

prayoga

The fourth kind of information is the verb's *prayoga*. *prayoga* is similar to what we call “active voice” and “passive voice” in English. In Sanskrit, we have *kartari prayoga* (“agent usage”), which is like the English active voice:

नरः कर्म करोति ।

naraḥ karma karoti.

The man does work.

नरः स्वपिति ।

naraḥ svapiti.

The man sleeps.

karmaṇi prayoga (“object usage”), which is like the English passive voice:

नरेण कर्म क्रियते ।

nareṇa karma kriyate.

Work **is being done** by the man.

and *bhāve prayoga* (“stative usage”), which we use instead of *karmaṇi prayoga* if the verb doesn't use an object. *bhāve prayoga* looks almost identical to *karmaṇi prayoga*:

नरेण सुष्यते ।

nareṇa supyate.

There is sleeping by the man. (The man sleeps.)

pada

The fifth kind of information is the verb's *pada*. Simply, some verb endings are called *parasmaipada*:

रामश् चरति

rāmaś carati

Rama walks.

And some are called *ātmanepada*:

रामो मन्यते

rāmo manyate

Rama thinks.

For some roots, *parasmaipada* and *ātmanepada* endings sometimes imply different meanings:

नरः पचति

naraḥ pacati

The man cooks (for others).

नरः पचते

naraḥ pacate

The man cooks (for himself).

But often, they don't have any major difference in meaning. We will revisit *pada* in a future lesson.

Review

1. What are the three basic parts of a Sanskrit verb? Roots, stems and endings
2. What are the three persons? third, second and first
3. What are the three numbers? singular, dual plural
एकवचनम्, द्विवचनम् च बहुवचनम्

4. What are the three *prayogas*? कर्तरी (active), कर्मणि (passive), भावे (passive without object) प्रयोगाः
5. What are the two *padas*? आत्मनेपद च परस्मैपद

Uninflected words

Sanskrit sentences use three basic types of words: verbs like *paśyati*, nominals like *rāmaḥ*, and a third category that we can call **uninflected words**. For example, the common word *na* (“not”) is an uninflected word:

गजो न गच्छति।

gajo na gacchati.

The elephant does **not** go.

What does *uninflected* mean? In Sanskrit, we can change a word to express different meanings:

नी → नयन्ति

nī → nayanti

lead → they lead

The technical name for these kinds of word changes is **inflection**. Many Sanskrit words are inflected, and many Sanskrit words are *uninflected*. Uninflected words can still be changed by sandhi, but otherwise, they always stay the same.

For example, consider the examples below. In each sentence, the nominal and verb change. But the uninflected word *na* stays the same:

गजो न गच्छति।

gajo na gacchati.

The elephant does **not** go.

गजौ न गमिष्यतः।

gajau na gamiṣyataḥ.

The two elephants will **not** go.

गजा न गच्छेयुः।

gajā na gaccheyuḥ.

The elephants might **not** go.

Uninflected words are simple. So in this lesson, we will simply learn about a few different kinds of uninflected words.

ca and vā

ca is a common uninflected word that means “and.” Notice how **ca** is used in the examples below:

रामः सीता च गच्छतः ।

rāmaḥ sītā ca gacchataḥ.

Rama and Sita go.

रामः सीता गजश् च गच्छन्ति ।

rāmaḥ sītā gajaś ca gacchanti.

Rama, Sita, and the elephant go.

In English, we use the word “and” just before the last item in our list: Rama, Sita, and the elephant. But in Sanskrit, **ca** comes at the end of the list of items: *rāmaḥ sītā gajaś ca*.

We can use **vā**, which means “or,” in the same way:

रामः सीता वा गच्छति ।

rāmaḥ sītā vā gacchati.

Rama or Sita goes.

रामः सीता गजो वा गच्छति ।

rāmaḥ sītā gajo vā gacchati.

Rama, Sita, or the elephant goes.

We can also repeat **ca** to say “Both ... and ...” and **vā** to say “Either ... or ...” Here are some examples:

रामश् च सीता च गच्छतः ।

rāmaś ca sītā ca gacchataḥ.

Both Rama and Sita go.

रामो वा सीता वा गच्छति ।

rāmo vā sītā vā gacchati.

Either Rama or Sita goes.

In an earlier lesson, we learned that Sanskrit word order is very flexible. But it is not *completely* flexible. Specifically, *ca* and *vā* cannot appear at the start of a sentence. This means that the example sentence below is not correct Sanskrit:

* च रामः सीता गच्छतः ।

* *ca rāmaḥ sītā gacchataḥ.*

saha and *vinā*

We can also use uninflected words to modify the basic sense of another word. For example, there is a nominal case that usually means “by means of”:

रामो गजेन नगरं गच्छति ।

rāmo gajena nagaraṃ gacchati.

Rama goes to the city **by means of an elephant**.

Do you remember what we call this case? We call it *case 3*. If we use the uninflected words *saha* or *vinā* with a case 3 word, we can refine the basic sense that case 3 expresses:

रामो गजेन सह नगरं गच्छति ।

rāmo gajena saha nagaraṃ gacchati.

Rama goes to the city **with an elephant**.

रामो गजेन विना नगरं गच्छति ।

rāmo gajena vinā nagaraṃ gacchati.

Rama goes to the city **without an elephant**.

saha and *vinā* usually follow the word they modify.

-tvā

As a final example, we can add the suffix **-tvā** to a verb root. If the root means “X,” the result means “having done X” or “after doing X.” Here are some examples:

नी + त्वा → नीत्वा

nī + tvā → nītvā

lead → **having led**

कृ + त्वा → कृत्वा

kṛ + tvā → kṛtvā

do, make → **having done or made**

These new words are used like verbs. In the examples below, the first two sentences are simple, and the third one uses the **-tvā** ending to create a more complex sentence:

रामो नगरं गच्छति ।

rāmo nagaram gacchati.

Rama goes to the city.

रामः सीतां पश्यति ।

rāmaḥ sītāṃ paśyati.

Rama sees Sita.

रामो नगरं **गत्वा** सीतां पश्यति ।

rāmo nagaram gatvā sītāṃ paśyati.

Rama, **after going** to the city, sees Sita.

Review

There are many different kinds of uninflected words, but they are all used in a simple way. Once we create them, we don't have to make any changes for gender, case, number, person, tense-mood, *prayoga*, or anything else.

1. Sanskrit word order is freer than English word order. Is Sanskrit word order completely free? Can we use whatever word order we like?

Uninflected words do not appear at the start of a sentence

Prefixes

So far, our core lessons have covered two major areas:

1. Sanskrit *sounds*: how they are pronounced, what they are like, and how they interact with each other through sandhi.
2. Sanskrit *sentences*: what they're like, what kinds of words they use, and how these words behave.

As we come to the end of our core lessons, we will study the third and final major area of Sanskrit grammar: how to make new Sanskrit words.

Let's start by learning about prefixes. **Prefixes** are small groups of sounds that we add to the beginning of something else:

गच्छन्ति → आगच्छन्ति

gacchanti → *āgacchanti*

they go → they come (“go **here**”)

Most prefixes are uninflected words. By adding prefixes to a word, we can change its basic meaning.

Verb prefixes

Verb prefixes are prefixes that we add to a verb root. These prefixes usually change a root's basic meaning in one of three different ways. Often, the prefix changes the root's meaning in a straightforward way:

आ + गच्छन्ति → आगच्छन्ति

ā + gacchanti → *āgacchanti*

here/toward + they go → they come (“go **here**”)

Sometimes, the prefix creates a more idiomatic change:

अव + गच्छन्ति → अवगच्छन्ति

ava + gacchanti → *avagacchanti*

down + they go → they understand

And sometimes, the prefix intensifies the word's basic meaning or produces essentially no change.

Let's learn about two prefixes here. First is the prefix *ā-*. (We add “-” to emphasize that this is a prefix.) *ā-* has the basic sense of “here” or “toward.” Notice how it affects the basic meaning of the verbs in the examples below:

गच्छन्ति → आगच्छन्ति

gacchanti → *āgacchanti*

they go → they come (“go **here**”)

नयन्ति → आनयन्ति

nayanti → *ānayanti*

they lead → they bring (“lead **here**”)

Next is the prefix *sam-*. *sam-* has the basic sense of “with” or “together.” Again, notice how it affects the basic meaning of the verbs below:

गच्छन्ति → संगच्छन्ति

gacchanti → *saṃgacchanti*

they go → they meet (“go **together**”)

नयन्ति → संनयन्ति

nayanti → *saṃnayanti*

they lead → They unite (“lead (others) **together**”)

Prefixes can also be combined. Up above, we learned what *āgacchanti* and *saṃgacchanti* mean. So what do you think *saṃāgacchanti* means?

गच्छन्ति → समागच्छन्ति

gacchanti → *saṃāgacchanti*

they go → they come together; they convene (“go **together here**”)

नयन्ति → समानयन्ति

nayanti → *saṃānayanti*

they lead → they gather (“lead **together here**”)

Nominal prefixes

Nominal prefixes are prefixes that we add to a nominal stem. These prefixes usually modify the stem's meaning in a straightforward way:

शोक → अशोक

śoka → *aśoka*

grief, sorrow → without grief or sorrow

Again, let's learn about two prefixes here. First is the prefix **a-**. *a-* has different meanings in different contexts. But when attached to a nominal, *a-* has the basic meaning of “not”:

हिंसा → अहिंसा

hiṃsā → *ahiṃsā*

violence → **non**-violence

बल → अबल

bala → *abala*

strength → **without** strength; weak, powerless

If the stem starts with a vowel, we use *an-* instead:

इष्ट → अनिष्ट (अन्-इष्ट)

iṣṭa → *aniṣṭa* (**an**-*iṣṭa*)

wanted → **un**wanted

This prefix is related to the prefixes in words like “in-credible” “a-moral,” and “un-able.”

Next is the prefix *sa-*. Like *sam-*, *sa-* has the basic sense of “with” or “together”:

बल → सबल

bala → *sabala*

strength → **with** strength; strong, powerful

Review

Prefixes are quite simple. There are a few small subtleties to them, but we can discuss those in a later lesson.

Suffixes

In the previous lesson, we learned that prefixes are small groups of sounds that we add to the *beginning* of something. A group of sounds that we add to the *end* of something is called a **suffix**.

Sanskrit has many different kinds of suffixes. Verb and nominal endings are all suffixes. So are the suffixes that turn verb roots into verb stems:

नी + अ → नय

$nī + a \rightarrow naya$

lead → lead

नी + ष्य → नेष्य

$nī + śya \rightarrow neśya$

lead → will lead

नी + इ → नायि

$nī + i \rightarrow nāyi$

lead → make lead

Sound changes

Sanskrit suffixes can cause many different sound changes. Most commonly, a suffix will make the root's vowel change. Usually, the root's vowel will become a compound vowel, and that vowel might change due to sandhi rules:

नी + अ → ने + अ → नय

$nī + a \rightarrow ne + a \rightarrow naya$

In English, we usually call these kinds of changes **vowel strengthening**. The idea is that a compound vowel is “stronger” than the simple vowel it comes from. You can see some examples of vowel strengthening in the examples below:

नी + अ → नय

$nī + a \rightarrow naya$

नी + ष्य → ने + ष्य → नेष्य

nī + śya → ne + śya → neṣya

नी + इ → नै + इ → नायि

nī + i → nai + i → nāyi

Since we know Sanskrit sounds well, we can see a connection between *ī*, *e*, *ai*, *ay*, and *āy*: *ī* is the root vowel, *e* and *ai* are its compound vowels, and *ay* and *āy* appear due to sandhi. This is why it is so important to understand Sanskrit's sounds and sandhi rules.

Root suffixes

Root suffixes are suffixes that we add directly to a verb root. Usually, they create nouns and adjectives. There are too many suffixes to list here, but let's consider two examples.

First is the suffix *-a*. (We add the “-” sign at the beginning to emphasize that this is a suffix.) *-a* has many functions, but it commonly creates abstract nouns:

विद् → वेद

vid → veda

know → knowledge; one of the four Vedas

जि → जय

ji → jaya

conquer → conquest, victory

युज् → योग

yuj → yoga

yoke, join, unite → yoking, junction, union; yoga

In the last example above, note that *j* becomes *g*. The sounds *c* and *j* often become *k* and *g* when certain suffixes follow them.

Next is the suffix *-ta*. *-ta* does not strengthen the root's vowel. When added to a root that means “to X,” this suffix usually means “(has been) X-ed.”

जि → जित

ji → *jita*

conquer → (has been) conquered

युज् → युक्त

yuj → *yukta*

yoke, join, unite → (has been) yoked, joined, or united
(*yuj* becomes *yuk* due to sandhi)

कृ + त → कृत

kṛ + *ta* → *kṛta*

do, make → (has been) done, (has been) made

Can we use prefixes and suffixes together? Yes. For example, let's use the prefix *sam-* that we used in the previous lesson. In addition to meaning “with” or “together,” this prefix can also mean “completely” or “fully”:

संजि → संजय

saṃji → *saṃjaya*

completely conquer → complete victory; Sanjay (a name)

Let's try combining *sam* with the root *kṛ* above. By a specific grammar rule, this combination becomes *saṃskṛ* with an extra *s*. Does *saṃskṛ* look familiar to you?

संस्कृ + त → संस्कृत

saṃskṛ + *ta* → *saṃskṛta*

completely or fully make; refine, perfect → perfected, refined; Sanskrit

Nominal suffixes

Nominal suffixes are suffixes that we usually add to nominal stems. As before, there are too many to list here. But as before, let's consider two examples.

First is the suffix *-in*. When we add *-in* to a word that means “X,” we create a word that means “characterized by X”:

योग + इन् → योगिन्

yoga + in → yogin

yoga → characterized by yoga; a yogi

(Note that the *-in* suffix removes the final *-a* of *yoga*.)

Next is the suffix *-tva*. When we add *-tva* to a word that means “X,” we create a word that means “X-ness”:

योग + त्व → योगत्व

yoga + tva → yogatva

yoga → “yoga-ness”; the state of yoga

Review

Sanskrit has many different root and nominal suffixes, and we can use these suffixes to create a variety of complex and expressive words.

1. What does “vowel strengthening” mean? [The root's vowel will become a compound vowel](#)
2. What is the difference between a root suffix and a nominal suffix?

[Root suffix are added directly to the root, while nominal suffix are added to nominal stems](#)

Compounds

This is our last core lesson. Here, we will learn about *compounds*, one of Sanskrit's most notable features.

Compounds are words that we make by combining multiple words. Compounds are short and simple, and they save time for both the speaker and the listener:

गजानां वनम् → गजवनम्
gajānām vanam → gajavanam
 the forest of elephants

Sanskrit uses compounds extensively. In some styles of Sanskrit, almost every sentence will have a compound. And these compounds can also be quite long and intricate.

In this lesson, we will learn about two basic types of compounds.

dvandva

In our first type of compound, we have two words that are in a list together. Here are some English examples of this type:

- Indochina (India and China)
- tractor-trailer (a tractor and a trailer)

In Sanskrit, these compounds are called *dvandva* compounds. The word *dvandva* literally means “pair.” Any set of words that could be combined with the word *ca* (“and”) can be combined into a *dvandva*:

रामः सीता च → रामसीते
rāmaḥ sītā ca → rāmasīte
 Rama and Sita

रामः सीता लक्ष्मणः च → रामसीतालक्ष्मणाः
rāmaḥ sītā lakṣmaṇaḥ ca → rāmasītālakṣmaṇāḥ
 Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana

tatpuruṣa

In our second type of compound, the first word describes the second in some way. Here are some English examples of this type:

- “wallpaper” (paper for a wall)
- “chessboard” (a board for chess)
- “beekeeper” (keeper of bees)

In all of these compounds, the second word is the main idea, and the first word modifies it. In Sanskrit, this kind of compound is called a *tatpuruṣa* compound.

Here are some Sanskrit examples of *tatpuruṣa* compounds:

रामस्य माता → राममाता

rāmasya mātā → rāmamātā

Rama's mother

रामस्य पुत्रः → रामपुत्रः

rāmasya putraḥ → rāmaputraḥ

Rama's son

रामस्य पत्नी → रामपत्नी

rāmasya patnī → rāmapatnī

Rama's wife

The word *tatpuruṣa* (“his man”) comes from the words *tat* (“he, that one”) and *puruṣa* (“man”). So, the word “*tatpuruṣa*” is itself a *tatpuruṣa* compound:

तस्य पुरुषः → तत्पुरुषः

tasya puruṣaḥ → tatpuruṣaḥ

his man

Understanding compounds

Compounds are easy to understand if we know their context. For example, the word “wallpaper” probably has a clear meaning to you, and you might have even

seen or felt wallpaper before. But someone from another culture might create interpretations like:

- “paper that is also a wall,” as in “I built this house with wallpaper.”
- “paper that is on a wall,” as in “I hung my diploma next to my other wall-papers.”

These interpretations don't occur to you because you know the cultural context. You know what wallpaper is.

Many Sanskrit compounds are the same way. If you know their cultural context and are familiar with them, they are easy to understand. If not, they can be difficult to understand.

But what do we do if we don't understand the culture at all? Thankfully, there are some basic rules of thumb that we can use to tell compounds apart. For example, if the words in a compound are all names, or all foods, or all flowers — that is, if they all have the same “type” — then the compound is probably a *dvandva*.

There are other basic rules we can use for the other types of compounds. We'll discuss these rules in a later lesson. (But as always, the best way is to read a lot of Sanskrit!)

Review

1. Describe the *dvandva* compound. [Two words that are in a list](#)
2. Describe the *tatpuruṣa* compound. Think of your own English example.

[First word describes the second in some way. Eg: Wristband, wristwatch](#)

Review

Congratulations! You have completed the core lessons. Take a moment to celebrate your hard work and review what you have learned.

We encourage you to set grammar aside for now and focus on finding interesting content. (See our [resources page](#) for details.) But if you want to continue, you can explore the other topics of this guide in whatever order you like. Go wherever your interests take you.

Sounds and sandhi

We started by learning about the Sanskrit sounds and their traditional order:

अ *a* आ *ā* इ *i* ई *ī* उ *u* ऊ *ū*

ऋ *ṛ*

ॠ *ṝ*

ऌ *ḷ*

ए *e*

ऐ *ai*

ओ *o*

औ *au*

अं *aṁ*

अः *aḥ*

क *ka*

ख *kha*

ग *ga*

घ *gha*

ङ *ṅa*

च *ca*

छ *cha*

ज *ja*

झ *jha*

ञ *ña*

ट *ṭa*

ठ *ṭha*

ड *ḍa*

ढ *ḍha*

ण *ṇa*

त *ta*

थ *tha*

द *da*

ध *dha*

न *na*

प *pa*

फ *pha*

ब *ba*

भ *bha*

म *ma*

य
ya

र
ra

ल
la

व
va

श
śa

ष
ṣa

स
sa

ह
ha

We then learned how to split these sounds into syllables:

धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे → ध र्म क्षे त्रे कु रु क्षे त्रे
dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre → dha rma kṣe tre ku ru kṣe tre

Then, we studied some simple sandhi rules and learned how these sounds combine with each other.

Words and sentences

After studying sounds and sandhi, we moved to sentences and words. We learned what Sanskrit sentences are like and how they behave. We also learned about the three basic types of Sanskrit words: nominals, verbs, and uninflected words.

We learned that nominals express information like gender:

गजः पश्यति ।

gajāḥ paśyati.

The (male) elephant sees.

गजा पश्यति ।

gajā paśyati.

The (female) elephant sees.

case:

गजश् चरति ।

gajāś carati.

The elephant walks.

रामो गजं चरति ।

rāmo gajaṃ carati.

Rama walks to the elephant.

and number:

गजः पश्यति ।

gajaḥ paśyati.

The elephant sees.

गजौ पश्यतः ।

gajau paśyataḥ.

The two elephants see.

गजाः पश्यन्ति ।

gajāḥ paśyanti.

The (many) elephants see.

We also learned that verbs express information like person:

नयति

nayati

(Someone) leads.

नयसि

nayasi

You lead.

नयामि

nayāmi

I lead.

number:

नयति

nayati

(Someone) leads.

नयतः

nayataḥ

The two of them lead.

नयन्ति

nayanti

All of them lead.

tense-mood:

नयामि

nayāmi

I lead.

नेष्यामि

neṣyāmi

I will lead.

नयेयम्

nayeyam

I might lead.

prayoga:

नयसि

nayasi

You lead.

नीयसे

nīyase

You are led.

and *pada*, which we will discuss in a later lesson.

Prefixes, suffixes, and compounds

Finally, we learned about how to create new words using prefixes:

गच्छन्ति → आगच्छन्ति

gacchanti → āgacchanti

They go. → They come.

हिंसा → अहिंसा

hiṃsā → ahiṃsā

violence → non-violence

suffixes:

युज् → योग

yuj → yoga

yoke, join, unite → yoking, junction, union; yoga

योग → योगिन्

yoga → yogin

yoga → yogi

and compounds:

रामः सीता च → रामसीते

rāmaḥ sītā ca → rāmasīte

Rama and Sita

रामस्य माता → राममाता

rāmasya mātā → rāmamātā

Rama's mother

Questions

Together, these core lessons are a complete high-level summary of Sanskrit grammar. What remain, of course, are the details.

1. What are the five points of pronunciation? Guttarals Palatals Cerebrals Dentals Labials
कण्ठ्य तालव्य मूढ्य दन्त्य ओष्ठ्य
2. Which vowels are compound vowels? ए ऐ ओ औ अर् अल्
3. What is the basic principle that most sandhi changes follow? Make it easier to pronounce
4. Why can we reorder the words in a Sanskrit sentence?

The verb and the subject are in the same tense and case and so there is no confusion on who is engaging in the verb and on whom it is being done.

5. What are the basic parts of a verb? root = धातु and ending = person + वचन
 6. What are the basic parts of a noun? stem and ending = वचन + विभक्ति
 7. Describe one of the Sanskrit compounds we learned about.

- द्वन्द्व = रामसीतालक्ष्मणाः - rāma sītā and lakṣmaṇa - list of words of the same kind
 - तत्पुरुष = रामपुत्रः = रामस्य पुत्रः यः सः - rāma's son - one word describes the other

Sounds

The sound system

Our core lessons already discussed the various Sanskrit sounds in detail. Here, provide much more detail about how to pronounce and describe these sounds. Where appropriate, we will also provide the standard English and Sanskrit terms.

Traditionally, Sanskrit has these main points of pronunciation:

- the soft palate (*kaṇṭhaḥ*, “throat”)
- the hard palate (*tālu*)
- the top of the roof of the mouth (*mūrdhā*, “head”)
- the teeth (*dantāḥ*)
- the lips (*oṣṭhau*)
- the nose (*nāsikā*)
- the base of the tongue (*jihvāmūlam*)

Some lists also include the chest (*urāḥ*) as the source of the flow of air.

In order, sounds pronounced with these points of pronunciation are called:

- **velar** sounds (*kaṇṭhya*), or **guttural** in some old books
- **palatal** sounds (*tālavya*)
- **retroflex** sounds (*mūrdhanya*), or **cerebral** or **lingual** in some old books
- **dental** sounds (*dantya*)
- **labial** sounds (*oṣṭhya*)
- **nasal** sounds (*anunāsika*)
- **uvular** sounds (*jihvāmūliya*)

Since *va* is pronounced with both the teeth and the lips, it is called **labio-dental** (*dantoṣṭhya*). And since *o* and *au* are pronounced with both the soft palate and the lips, they are called **labio-velar** (*kaṇṭhoṣṭhya*).

You do not need to remember any of these new terms. We list them here just for your reference.

Vowels

Also known as: *svarāḥ* (“tones”), *akṣarāṇi* (“syllables”), *ac*

Vowels are simple, open sounds:

अ
a

By changing *a* in different ways, we can create the full set of Sanskrit vowels. In this lesson, we will learn about all of the ways we can modify this vowel.

Point of pronunciation

Also known as: *uccāraṇa-sthāna* (“pronunciation place”)

First, we can change the vowel's point of pronunciation. Sanskrit vowels use five basic points of pronunciation:

- the soft palate
- the hard palate
- the edge of the roof of the mouth
- the base of the teeth
- the lips

By using these five points of pronunciation, we can create five basic vowels:

- *a* with the soft palate
- *i* with the hard palate
- *ṛ* with the edge of the roof of the mouth
- *ḷ* with the base of the teeth
- *u* with the lips

अ
a

इ
i

ऋ
ṛ

ॠ
ḷ

उ
u

Vowel that use just one point of pronunciation are called **simple vowels** (*samānākṣarāṇi*, “simple vowels”). If we use multiple points of pronunciation, we create **compound vowels** (*sandhyakṣarāṇī*, “joined vowels”):

- *e* and *ai* with the soft palate and the hard palate
- *o* and *au* with the soft palate and the lips

ए
e

ओ
o

ऐ
ai

औ
au

Length

Also known as: *kāla* (“time”)

Second, we can change the vowel's **length**. Most Sanskrit vowels are either **short** (*hrasva*) and **long** (*dīrgha*). Short vowels are pronounced for one unit of time (*eka-mātra*, “with one measure”), and long vowels are pronounced for twice as long as short vowels (*dvi-mātra*, “with two measures”).

All of the short vowels, except for *l*, have a long version:

आ
ā

ई
ī

ऋ
ṛ

ऊ
ū

All of the compound vowels are already long, and they have no short form.

There is also a third length, **protracted** (*pluta*), that is mainly used in Vedic Sanskrit. All of the simple and compound vowels can be *pluta*. *pluta* vowels are written with a 3 added to the end of them:

अ
a

आ
ā

आ३
ā3

So, we have the *pluta* vowels *ā3*, *ī3*, *ū3*, *ṛ3*, *l3*, *e3*, *ai3*, *o3*, and *au3*.

Nasality

Also known as: *ānunāsikyam* (“nasality”)

Third, we can make the vowel **nasal** (*anunāsika*) or non-nasal (*an-anunāsika*). Nasal vowels are rarely used in normal Sanskrit.

अ
a

अँ
ã

Accent

Also known as: *svara* (“tone”)

Fourth, we can change the vowel's accent (*svara*). In Vedic compositions, accent is used extensively, but it does not appear anymore in standard Sanskrit. There are three basic accents:

- *anudātta* (“not raised”) or **grave**, which is a low tone
- *udātta* (“raised”) or **acute**, which is a high tone
- *svarita* (“voiced”) or **circumflex**, which is mix of the high and low tones. But in many styles of Vedic chanting, the *svarita* is instead a plain high tone that is higher than the *udātta*.

Here are the three accents as they are written in Devanagari. From left to right, we have *anudātta*, *udātta*, and *svarita*:

अ
ā

अ
a

अ
a'

The different Vedic accents and their pronunciation are out of scope for our grammar guide.

-kāra and -varṇa

In English, we often say “the letter a” rather than just “a.” Likewise, in Sanskrit, we can add **-kāra** to the end of any vowel to give it a more usable name. Thus Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita*:

अक्षराणाम् अकारो ऽस्मि

akṣarāṇām akāro 'smi

Of sounds, I am the letter a.

We can also give names to certain vowel families. For example, *a* has:

- three possible lengths (short, long, and protacted)
- three possible accents (*udātta*, *anudātta*, and *svarita*)
- two kinds of nasality (nasal and non-nasal)

In total, this gives us $3 \times 3 \times 2 = 18$ different variations on the vowel *a*. You can see all of them below:

अ अ अ॑ अँ अँ अँ॑
 आ आ आ॑ आँ आँ आँ॑
 आ॒ आ॒ आ॒ आँ॒ आँ॒ आँ॒

We can refer to all 18 of these variations by the name **avarṇa** (“the *a* class”). Two sounds in the same *varṇa* are called **similar** (**sa-varṇa**, “of the same *varṇa*”).

Just as we have *avarṇa*, we also have:

- **ivarṇa** for the 18 variations of *i*
- **uvarṇa** for the 18 variations of *u*
- **rvarṇa** for the 18 variations of *r*
- **lvarṇa** for the 12 variations of *l*

lvarṇa has only 12 variations because *l* has no long version.

vivṛta* and *saṃvṛta

Let's dwell on *a* a little longer. Have you noticed that *a* is slightly different from the other vowels?

i and *ī* have similar pronunciations, except that *i* is short and *ī* is long. This is similarly true for the sounds of *uvarṇa*, *ṛvarṇa*, and *lvarṇa*. But although *a* and *ā* are part of the same *varṇa*, *a* is actually slightly different from *ā* and the other vowels.

Except for *a*, all vowels are called ***vivṛta*** (“uncovered”, “open”) because they are pronounced with the vowel cords uncontracted. *a*, however, is called ***saṃvṛta*** (“covered,” “contracted”) because it is pronounced with the vocal cords in a more contracted position.

To compare these sounds to English, we can say that all the sounds in *ivarnā* sound like the “ee” in “teeth” but with different modifications. But although *ā* sounds like the “a” in “father,” *a* does not have that sound. Instead, *a* sounds like the “u” in “mud.”

Review

Each of the vowels *a*, *i*, *u*, and *ṛ* has 18 different forms (3 lengths, 3 accents, and optional nasality). Each of the vowels *l*, *e*, *ai*, *o*, and *au* has just 12 different forms, since *l* has no long form and the others have no short form.

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| 1. What are the three vowel lengths? | ह्रस्व दीर्घ and प्लुत |
| 2. What are the three vowel accents? | उदात्त अनुदात्त and स्वरित |
| 3. Which vowels are in <i>uvarṇa</i> ? | उ उ उँ उँ उँ
ऊ ऊ ऊँ ऊँ ऊँ |
| 4. Which vowels are <i>saṃvṛta</i> ? | ऊँ ऊँ ऊँ ऊँ ऊँ ऊँ |

Only अ is सम्बृत

Consonants

Also known as: *vyañjanāni* (“embellishments”), *hal*

Consonants are sounds that we pronounce by changing the basic flow of air through the mouth. In Sanskrit, consonants use three different kinds of air flow:

- ***sprṣṭam***: full contact at the points of pronunciation. Air no longer flows through the mouth at all. This applies for the sounds *ka* through *ma*.
- ***īṣatsprṣṭam***: slight contact at the points of pronunciation. Air flows through the mouth in a highly constricted way. This applies for the sounds *ya* through *va*.
- ***īṣadvivṛtam***: loose contact at the points of pronunciation. Air flows through the mouth in a less constricted way. This applies for the sounds *śa* through *ha*.

ka through *ma*

Also known as: *sparśāḥ* (“contacted (sounds)”)

The first twenty-five consonants are often arranged in a square with 5 rows and 5 columns:

क <i>ka</i>	ख <i>kha</i>	ग <i>ga</i>	घ <i>gha</i>	ङ <i>ṅa</i>
च <i>ca</i>	छ <i>cha</i>	ज <i>ja</i>	झ <i>jha</i>	ञ <i>ña</i>
ट <i>ṭa</i>	ठ <i>ṭha</i>	ड <i>ḍa</i>	ढ <i>ḍha</i>	ण <i>ṇa</i>
त <i>ta</i>	थ <i>tha</i>	द <i>da</i>	ध <i>dha</i>	न <i>na</i>
प <i>pa</i>	फ <i>pha</i>	ब <i>ba</i>	भ <i>bha</i>	म <i>ma</i>

For all of these sounds, the points of pronunciation make full contact with each other. Thus they are called ***sparsāḥ*** (“contacts”). In English grammar, the nasal sounds are called **nasals**, and the rest are called **stops**.

As a reminder, here is how these sounds are usually described:

- The sounds in the first and second columns are called **unvoiced** (*aghoṣāḥ*), and the others are called **voiced** (*ghoṣavantah*). This should be *ghoṣavantāḥ* ?
- The sounds in the second and fourth columns are called **aspirated** (*mahāprāṇāḥ*), and the others are called **unaspirated** (*alpaprāṇāḥ*).
- The sounds in the fifth column are called **nasal** (*anunāsikāḥ*).

ya through va

Also known as: *antaḥsthāḥ* (“in-between (sounds)”)

In Sanskrit, the four semivowels are called *antaḥstha* (“in-between”), perhaps because these consonants are pronounced in a way that is in-between vowels and other consonants:

य
ya

र
ra

ल
la

व
va

Semivowels can also be nasalized. For example, the *anusvāra* is pronounced like a nasal y when y follows it.

śa through ha

Also known as: *ūṣmāṇaḥ* (“vapor (sounds)”)

The last four sounds are called **sibilants** in English grammar and *ūṣmāṇaḥ* in Sanskrit:

श
śa

ष
ṣa

स
sa

ह
ha

As a reminder, *ha* is voiced. But *śa*, *ṣa*, and *sa* are not.

la

In certain styles of Vedic recitation, a *ḍa* sound between vowels becomes la. And likewise, a *ḍha* sound between vowels becomes lha:

ळ
la

ल्ह
lha

These consonants appear only in Vedic compositions.

-kāra and -varga

As with the vowels, we can add **-kāra** to the end of any consonant to give it a more usable name. But *ra* is called **repha** (“snarl,” “burr”) instead:

क → ककारः

ka → *kakārah*

ka → The letter *ka*

र → रेफः

ra → *rephaḥ*

ra → The letter *ra*

We can also use the word **-varga** (“group, division”) to refer to sets of consonants with similar properties. We have:

- **kavarga** for the first five consonants (*ka kha ga gha ṇa*)
- **cavarga** for the next five consonants (*ca cha ja jha ṇa*)
- **ṭavarga** for the next five consonants (*ṭa ṭha ḍa ḍha ṇa*)
- **tavarga** for the next five consonants (*ta tha da dha na*)
- **pavarga** for the next five consonants (*pa pha ba bha ma*)
- **yavarga** for the semivowels (*ya ra la va*)
- **śavarga** for the sibilants (*śa ṣa sa ha*)

Review

1. Which sounds are in *śavarga*? ष श स ह
2. What is another name for the consonant *ra*? रेफः

Other sounds

In this lesson, we will revisit the *anusvāra* and the *visarga*. We will also learn about two variants of the *visarga*: the *upadhmānīya* and the *jihvāmūlīya*.

anusvāra

The *anusvāra* appears due to sandhi. Usually, it appears when the sound *m* is followed by a consonant sound:

रामः रावणम् हन्ति → रामो रावणं हन्ति

rāmaḥ rāvaṇam hanti → rāmo rāvaṇaṃ hanti

Rama kills Ravana.

How is the *anusvāra* pronounced? The *anusvāra* is a “pure nasal” sound that has no equivalent in English. You can approximate it by pronouncing *m* while pressing your tongue against the roof of your mouth.

However, the *anusvāra* often becomes many other sounds due to sandhi. If it is followed by any consonant except for the ones in *śavarga* (*śa ṣa sa ha*), it usually becomes the closest matching nasal sound:

संगः → सङ्गः

saṃgaḥ → saṅgaḥ

संजयः → सञ्जयः

saṃjayaḥ → sañjayaḥ

संन्यासः → सन्न्यासः

saṃnyāsaḥ → sannyaśaḥ

संबन्धः → सम्बन्धः

saṃbandhaḥ → sambandhaḥ

And in front of *yavarga* sounds (*ya ra la va*), it becomes a nasalized semivowel.

In general, people don't like writing these nasal sounds out, so they use the *anusvāra* as a shorthand.

If you would like to read more about the *anusvāra*, we recommend [this short monograph](#) by Shriramana Sharma.

visarga

Like the *anusvāra*, the *visarga* also appears due to sandhi. When a word ends in an *s* or an *r* sound, that sound becomes the *visarga*:

रामस् → रामः

rāmas → *rāmaḥ*

Rama

मातर् → मातः

mātar → *mātaḥ*

mother!

Traditionally, the *visarga* is often called the ***visarjanīya***, which has essentially the same meaning as the word *visarga*.

jihvāmūlīya and *upadhmānīya*

There are two variants of the *visarga* that are worth knowing. These variants are often used in spoken Sanskrit, but they are not usually written down.

The first is the ***jihvāmūlīya***. In English linguistics, this is called a **voiceless uvular fricative**. This sound is like the *visarga*, but it is pronounced further back in the base of the throat. The *jihvāmūlīya*, if it is used, is used in front of the consonants *ka* and *kha*.

The second is the ***upadhmānīya***. In English, this sound is called a **voiceless bilabial fricative**. This sound is similar to the English “f” sound, but it is not pronounced with any help from the teeth; it is pronounced only with the lips. The *upadhmānīya*, if it is used, is used in front of the consonants *pa* and *pha*.

Modern pronunciation

If you listen to modern Sanskrit pronunciation closely, you might hear certain pronunciations that differ from the traditional descriptions. In this lesson, we will describe some of these differences.

r, *ṛ*, and *l*

The ancient descriptions are clear that *r*, *ṛ*, and *l* are vowel sounds. Even so, modern speakers often pronounce these vowels like so:

कृष्ण → क्रिष्ण, कृष्ण, कृष्ण

kr̥ṣṇa → *kriṣṇa*, *kruṣṇa*, *krr̥ṣṇa*

पितृन् → पित्रीन्, पित्रून्, पितृन्

pitṛ̃n → *pitṛīn*, *pitṛūn*, *pitṛ̃n*

क्लृप्त → क्लिप्त, क्लुप्त, क्लिप्त, क्लुप्त

klṛpta → *klipta*, *klupta*, *klripta*, *klrupta*

l, especially, has many variants, perhaps because it is so rare.

The *visarga*

In modern times, the *visarga* is often pronounced as an echo of the previous vowel when at the end of a word or sentence:

मुनिः → मुनिहि

muniḥ → *munih*

तैः → तैहि

taiḥ → *taihi*

नौः → नौहु

nauḥ → *nauhu*

jñā

The combination *jñā* often has these pronunciations:

विज्ञानम् → विग्यानम्

vijñānam → *vigyānam*

(northern style)

विज्ञानम् → विग्न्यानम्

vijñānam → *vignyānam*

(southern style)

hna* and *hma

The combinations *hna* and *hma* often have these pronunciations:

अह् → अन्ह

ahna → *anha*

ब्रह् → ब्रम्ह

brahma → *bramha*

Sandhi

The sandhi system

When we speak quickly, we make many kinds of small and subconscious changes to the way we speak. In Sanskrit, these sound changes are called **sandhi**, which means “joining” or “junction.” In this topic, we will study the different types of sandhi in more detail.

There are many different kinds of sandhi changes. If a vowel comes first, it is called **vowel sandhi**:

सीता उदकम् इच्छति → सीतोदकम् इच्छति

sītā udakam icchati → sītōdakam icchati

Sita wants water.

If a *visarga* comes first, it is called **visarga sandhi**:

रामः उदकम् इच्छति → राम उदकम् इच्छति

rāmaḥ udakam icchati → rāma udakam icchati

Rama wants water.

And if a consonant comes first, it is called **consonant sandhi**:

हनुमान् जलम् इच्छति → हनुमाञ् जलम् इच्छति

hanumān jalam icchati → hanumāñ jalam icchati

Hanuman wants water.

When we learn about sandhi changes, we should also know *where* they occur. Some sandhi changes occur between the different parts of a *single word*:

ने + अ + न्ति → नयन्ति

ne + a + nti → nayanti

They lead.

गज + इन → गजेन

gaja + ina → gajena

by the elephant

Others occur between *two different words*:

सीता उदकम् इच्छति । → सीतोदकम् इच्छति ।

sītā udakam icchati. → sītodakam icchati.

Sita wants water.

Sandhi changes *within* a single word must always be followed, and sandhi changes *between* words occur optionally. But although these changes are optional, most Sanskrit texts will use them.

Vowel sandhi

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 icchati → *sītodakam icchati*

Sita drinks water.

Table of changes

Generally, there are two ways we can describe sandhi rules:

1. 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.
2. 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*:

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

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 *ṛ*, *ṝ*, or *ḷ*, it becomes a semivowel instead:

सीता ऋषिम् पश्यति → सीतर्षि पश्यति

sītā ṛṣim paśyati → *sītarṣiṃ 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 → upārcchati

(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.)

Review

There are many small details to vowel sandhi. But this lesson is a complete summary of its most common patterns. As you read more Sanskrit, you will understand vowel sandhi instinctively.

We do not recommend memorizing the rules above. But if you would like to practice these rules, you can try applying sandhi changes to the examples below:

सीता एव पृच्छति ।

सीतैव पृच्छति

sītā eva pṛcchati.

Sita herself asks.

अश्वाः फलानि इच्छन्ति ।

अश्वाः फलानीच्छन्ति

aśvāḥ phalāni icchanti.

The horses want the fruits.

नरौ नगराणि आगच्छतः ।

नरौ नगराण्यागच्छतः

narau nagarāṇi āgacchataḥ.

Two men come to the city.

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 → *mātaḥ*

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 in 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

bālaḥ carati → *bālaś carati*

The boy walks.

बालः टिप्पणीम् पठति → बालष् टिप्पणीं पठति

bālaḥ ṭippaṇīm paṭhati → *bālaṣ ṭippaṇīm paṭhati*

The boy reads the commentary.

बालः तिष्ठति → बालस् तिष्ठति

bālaḥ 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 (नरःषण्डं 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 udakaṃ pibanti

The men drink water.

नराः मद्यम् पिबन्ति → नरा मद्यं पिबन्ति

narāḥ madyam pibanti → narā madyaṃ 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 madyaṃ pibati → *naro madyaṃ 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 udakaṃ pibati → *nara udakaṃ pibati*

The man drinks water.

नरः ओदनम् इच्छति → नर ओदनम् इच्छति

naraḥ odanaṃ icchati → *nara odanaṃ 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 (द्वार्) 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

agniḥ rocate → agnī rocate

The fire is pleasing.

वायुः रोचते → वायू रोचते

vāyuḥ rocate → vāyū rocate

The wind is pleasing.

द्वाः (द्वार्) रोचते → द्वा रोचते

dvāḥ (dvār) rocate → dvā rocate

The door is pleasing.

sa and eṣa

The words *saḥ* (“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

saḥ 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

saḥ icchati → sa icchati

He wants.

सः चिन्तयति → स चिन्तयति

saḥ cintayati → *sa cintayati*

He thinks.

एषः पश्यति → एष पश्यति

eṣaḥ paśyati → *eṣa paśyati*

He sees.

Review

You do not need to memorize the rules above. But if you would like to practice using them, you can try to apply the correct *visarga* sandhi changes to the examples below:

रामः गच्छति।

रामो गच्छति

rāmaḥ gacchati.

नराः गच्छन्ति।

नरा गच्छन्ति

narāḥ gacchanti.

नरः अश्वम् पश्यति।

नरिऽश्वं पश्यति

naraḥ aśvam paśyati.

सः रामं पश्यति।

स रामं पश्यति

saḥ rāmaṃ paśyati.

गुरुः अस्ति।

गुरुरस्ति

guruḥ asti.

Consonant sandhi between words

Also known as: *vyañjana-sandhi*, *hal-sandhi*

Consonant sandhi is the name for sandhi changes between a consonant and some other sound. Here is a simple example of consonant sandhi:

सीता वनम् गच्छति → सीता वनं गच्छति

sītā vanam gacchati → *sītā vanam gacchati*

Sita goes to the forest.

Consonant sandhi is complex. In this lesson, we will focus on the common sandhi changes that occur between two words. These changes also apply between the two words in a compound.

Reducing consonants

Sanskrit has many consonants. But Sanskrit words end only in specific consonant sounds. So we must first apply a few rules to make sure that our word ends in a valid consonant sound.

Before we study the specific rules, let's first see some examples of what these rules do. In the examples below, the words on the left don't follow the rules and are not valid words. After applying the rules, we get the correct results on the right:

अगच्छन्त् → अगच्छन्

agacchant → *agacchan*

they went

वाच् → वाक्

vāc → *vāk*

speech

दिश् → दिक्

diś → *dik*

direction

राज् → राट्

rāj → *rāṭ*

king

समिध् → समित्

samidh → *samit*

(sacred) wood, kindling

नरस् → नरः

naras → *naraḥ*

man

Now, here are the changes that we should apply to words ending in consonants. First, a word is not usually allowed to end in multiple consonants. If a word does end in multiple consonants, we keep only the first of those consonants. You can see some examples of this below:

अगच्छन्त् → अगच्छन्

agacchant → *agacchan*

they went

पश्यन्त् → पश्यन्

paśyant → *paśyan*

while seeing

प्राञ्च् → प्राज्

prāñc → *prāñ*

facing, opposite

There are rare exceptions, usually if the second-to-last consonant is *r*:

ऊर्ज् → ऊर्ज्

ūrj → *ūrj*

strength, vigor (no change)

Second, consonants pronounced at the hard palate generally become *k*. (*ñ* becomes *ṇ*.) A very small number of words, such as *rāj*, use *ṭ* instead:

वाच् → वाक्

vāc → *vāk*

speech

दिश् → दिक्

dīś → *dik*

direction

प्राञ् → प्राङ्

prāñ → *prāṅ*

facing, opposite

राज् → राट्

rāj → *rāt*

king

Third, the remaining consonant becomes unaspirated and unvoiced if it has an unaspirated and unvoiced version. In the first example below, *dh* has an unvoiced and unaspirated version *t*, so it becomes *t*. In the second example, *m* has no unvoiced or unaspirated version, so it stays the same:

समिध् → समित्

samidh → *samit*

(sacred) wood, kindling

वनम् → वनम्

vanam → *vanam*

forest (no change)

Finally, -s and -r become the *visarga*:

नरस् → नरः

naras → *narah*

man

द्वार् → द्वाः

dvār → *dvāḥ*

door

Sanskrit words do not usually end in semivowels (*ya ra la va*). So by the end of this process, we are left with eight possible final sounds: *k*, *ṭ*, *t*, *p*, *ṇ*, *n*, *m*, and the *visarga*.

Rules for *k*, *ṭ*, *t*, and *p*

k, *ṭ*, *t*, and *p* use the same voicing as the sound that follows them:

तत् वनम् → तद् वनम्

tat vanam → *tad vanam*

तत् उदकम् → तद् उदकम्

tat udakam → *tad udakam*

तत् फलम् → तत् फलम्

tat phalam → *tat phalam*

They also become nasal when the sound that follows them is nasal:

वाक् न → वाङ् न

vāk na → *vāṇ na*

राट् न → राण् न

rāṭ na → *rāṇ na*

तत् न → तन् न

tat na → *tan na*

ककुप् न → ककुम् न

kakup na → *kakum na*

If the second sound is *h*, then we usually get this change:

वाक् ह → वाग् घ

vāk ha → *vāg gha*

राट् ह → राड् ढ

rāṭ ha → rāḍ ḍha

तत् ह → तद् ध

tat ha → tad dha

ककुप् ह → ककुब् भ

kakup ha → kakub bha

Some learners find it helpful to see these changes in a table:

<i>k</i>	<i>ṭ</i>	<i>p</i>	
<i>ṇ</i>	<i>ṇ</i>	<i>m</i>	nasal sounds
<i>g*</i>	<i>ḍ*</i>	<i>b*</i>	<i>h</i>
<i>g</i>	<i>ḍ</i>	<i>b</i>	other voiced sounds
<i>k</i>	<i>ṭ</i>	<i>p</i>	unvoiced sounds

In the table above, * means that the following *h* shifts its point of pronunciation to match the first sound.

Extra rules for -t

-t changes frequently. If the next consonant is pronounced at the hard palate (like *ca*) or the roof of the mouth (like *ṭa*), -t changes to a sound with the same point of pronunciation:

तत् चित्रम् → तच् चित्रम्

tat citram → tac citram

तत् जलम् → तज् जलम्

tat jalam → taj jalam

If *l* is the second sound, it becomes *l*:

तत् लभस्व → तल् लभस्व

tat labhasva → *tal labhasva*

Obtain that.

And if the next sound is *ś*, we get this change:

तत् शोचन्ति → तच् छोचन्ति

tat śocanti → *tac chocanti*

As before, some learners find it helpful to see these changes in a table:

<i>t</i>	
<i>n</i>	nasal sound
<i>c</i>	<i>c, ch</i>
<i>j</i>	<i>j, jh</i>
<i>ṭ</i>	<i>ṭ, ṭh</i>
<i>ḍ</i>	<i>ḍ, ḍh</i>
<i>l</i>	<i>l</i>
<i>c</i> (<i>ś</i> becomes <i>ch</i>)	<i>ś</i>
<i>d</i> (<i>h</i> becomes <i>dh</i>)	<i>h</i>
<i>d</i>	other voiced sounds
<i>t</i>	other sounds

Rules for -n

Like *-t*, *-n* changes often. If the next consonant is a voiced consonant at the hard palate (like *ja*) or the roof of the mouth (like *ṇa*), *-n* changes to the nasal sound with the same point of pronunciation:

नरान् जयामि → नराञ् जयामि

narān jayāmi → *narāñ jayāmi*

If *l* is the second sound, it becomes a nasal *l*:

तान् लभन्ते → ताँल् लभन्ते
tān labhante → *tā̃l labhante*

In front of *c/ch*, *ṭ/ṭh*, or *t/th*, *n* becomes *ṁś*, *ṁṣ*, and *ms* respectively:

तान् चरन्ति → तांश् चरन्ति
tān caranti → *tāṁś caranti*

तान् तरन्ति → तांस् तरन्ति
tān taranti → *tāṁs taranti*

And if the next sound is *ś*, two different outcomes are possible:

तान् शोचन्ति → ताज् शोचन्ति
tān śocanti → *tājñ śocanti*
 (option 1)

तान् शोचन्ति → ताज् छोचन्ति
tān śocanti → *tājñ chocanti*
 (option 2)

Again, some learners find it helpful to see these changes in a table:

<i>n</i>	
<i>ṁś</i>	<i>c, ch</i>
<i>ñ</i>	<i>j, jh</i>
<i>ṁṣ</i>	<i>ṭ, ṭh</i>
<i>ṇ</i>	<i>ḍ, ḍh</i>
<i>ms</i>	<i>t, th</i>
nasal <i>l</i>	<i>l</i>
<i>ñ</i> (<i>ś</i> optionally becomes <i>ch</i>)	<i>ś</i>
<i>n</i>	other sounds

Why ढs?

Are you surprised that *-n* might become *-ढs*? This strange change has a reasonable explanation. Many of the Sanskrit words that end in *-n* originally ended in *-ns*. After we reduce consonants, only *-n* remains. But if certain unvoiced sounds follow, we keep that *-s* sound. Then the *-s* changes according to normal sandhi rules.

Rules for *-m*

-m becomes the *anusvāra* when consonants follow:

सीता वनम् गच्छति → सीता वनं गच्छति
sītā vanam gacchati → *sītā vanam̐ gacchati*

And it may optionally become the nasal sound that matches the following consonant:

फलम् चरामि → फलञ् चरामि
phalam carāmi → *phalañ carāmi*

फलम् खादामि → फलङ् खादामि
phalam khādāmi → *phalaṅ khādāmi*

In modern times, this change is usually not written down. But, it is often used in spoken Sanskrit.

Rules for the *visarga*

We learned about *visarga* sandhi already. Please see the previous lesson for details.

Review

There are many small details to consonant sandhi. But this lesson is a complete summary of its most common patterns.

Consonant sandhi within a word

In the previous lesson, we learned that consonant sandhi can occur between two different words:

तत् इच्छामि → तद् इच्छामि ।

tat icchāmi → tad icchāmi.

I want that.

Consonant sandhi also occurs within a single word:

मरुत् + भिः → मरुद्भिः

marut + bhiḥ → marudbhiḥ

by the winds

Consonant sandhi *within a word* is complex and complicated. In this lesson, we will explain some of its general patterns.

General changes

If the second sound is a vowel, nasal sound, or semivowel, there are usually no sandhi changes:

वच् + अन्ति → वचन्ति

vac + anti → vacanti

वच् + मि → वच्मि

vac + mi → vacmi

वाच् + य → वाच्य

vāc + ya → vācyā

Otherwise, consonant sandhi within a word generally ^{follow} the same principles we learned about in the previous lesson.

Preserving aspirated sounds

One important difference is that we should preserve aspirated sounds if possible. This idea is difficult to explain, but it is easy to understand:

बुध् + त → बुद्ध

budh + ta → buddha

(aspiration moves to *ta*)

लभ् + त → लब्ध

labh + ta → labdha

(aspiration moves to *ta*)

बोध् + स्य → भोत्स्य

bodh + sya → bhotsya

(aspiration moves to the first consonant)

दह् + स्य → धक्ष्य

dah + sya → dhakṣya

दह् → धक्

dah → dhak

burning

(aspiration moves to the first consonant)

But sometimes, there is no sound we can move the aspiration to. In these instances, we remove the aspiration completely:

मुह् → मोक्ष्यति

muh → mokṣyati

be deluded → will be deluded

मुह् → मुक्

muh → muk

deluding

(*m* stays the same.)

***n* → ṇ**

In Sanskrit, *n* often shifts its point of pronunciation and becomes ṇ:

गुरुना → गुरुणा

gurunā → *guruṇā*

विषेन → विषेण

viṣena → *viṣeṇa*

Generally, the sounds *r* and *ṣ* change *n* to *ṇ*. This change can occur even if the two sounds are separated by other sounds:

रामेन → रामेण

rāmena → *rāmeṇa*

रामायन → रामायण

rāmāyana → *rāmāyaṇa*

वर्षभोग्येन → वर्षभोग्येण

varṣabhogyena → *varṣabhogyeṇa*

Which sounds can come in between? Generally, any sound that we can pronounce without moving our tongue very much can come in between. These sounds include:

- all vowels
- *y* and *v*
- consonants pronounced with the soft palate (*k kh g gh ṅ h*)
- consonants pronounced with the lips (*p ph b bh m*)

There are many exceptions and subtleties to this rule. For now, just remember that *n* often changes to *ṇ* if it follows *r* or *ṣ*.

s* → *ṣ

Likewise, *s* often shifts and becomes *ṣ*:

अग्नि + सु → अग्निषु

agni + su → *agniṣu*

धनुस् + आ → धनुषा

dhanus + ā → dhanuṣā

Generally, any vowel other than *a* or *ā* changes the following *s* to *ṣ*. The consonant *k* can cause this change too:

वाक् + सु → वाक्षु

vāk + su → vākṣu

In English, this change is sometimes called the **ruki rule** because it is caused by “r” sounds (*r ṛ*), “u” sounds (*u ū o au*), “k” sounds (*k*), and “i” sounds (*i ī e ai*).

There are many exceptions and subtleties to this rule. For now, just remember that *s* often changes to *ṣ* if it follows “ruki” sounds.

Nominals 1: Normal stems

The nominal system

Nominals are “naming” words. Along with verbs and uninflected words, they are one of the three main types of Sanskrit word. We use the word *nominal* so that we can refer to many different types of words at once. These types include nouns, adjectives, pronouns, and numerals.

In this lesson, we'll learn about the basic parts of a nominal word. We'll also learn what kinds of meanings the different nominal endings can express.

Stems and endings

Every nominal word has two parts: a **stem** and an **ending**. In the examples below, we combine a stem with its ending to create a complete word:

सिंह + ः → सिंहः

siṃha + *ḥ* → *siṃhaḥ*

the lion

सिंह + स्य → सिंहस्य

siṃha + *śya* → *siṃhasya*

of the lion

सिंह + ऐः → सिंहैः

siṃha + *aiḥ* → *siṃhaiḥ*

by the lions

The stem contains the nominal's basic meaning. And the ending expresses three basic kinds of information: **gender**, **number**, and **case**.

The three genders

In the core lessons, we learned that Sanskrit nominals use three different genders. These are the **masculine** gender:

सिंहो गच्छति

siṃho gacchati

The (male) lion goes.

the **feminine** gender:

सिंहा गच्छति

siṃhā gacchati

The (female) lion goes.

and the **neuter** gender:

वनम् अस्ति

vanam asti

There is a forest.

Many nominal stems can freely use any of these three genders. But noun stems generally use a fixed gender. Noun stems use a fixed gender even if they don't refer to living beings:

योग

yoga

yoga (masculine)

नीति

nīti

wise conduct (feminine)

निर्वाण

nīrvāṇa

nirvana (neuter)

How do we determine which gender a noun should use? We can usually determine a noun's gender by noticing the sounds at the end of a stem. Here are some basic rules that might be helpful:

- Nouns ending in *-a* are never feminine.
- Nouns ending in *-ā*, *-ī*, and *-ū* are almost always feminine.
- Nouns made with the *-tra* and *-ana* suffixes are usually neuter.

The three numbers

In the core lessons, we saw that Sanskrit nominals use three different numbers (*vacana*). These are the **singular**, which is used for one item:

सिंहः पश्यति ।

siṃhaḥ paśyati.

The lion sees.

the **dual**, which is used for exactly two items:

सिंहौ पश्यतः ।

siṃhau paśyataḥ.

The two lions see.

and the **plural**, which is used for three or more items:

सिंहाः पश्यन्ति ।

siṃhāḥ paśyanti.

The (many) lions see.

Verbs also use all three of these numbers. In a Sanskrit sentence, the verb and the case 1 noun should have the same number.

The eight cases

Case, roughly speaking, is the name for the way that Sanskrit nominals express different roles in a sentence. Sanskrit uses eight different cases.

Case 1 can be thought of as the *default* case. Usually, it refers to the subject of the action:

सिंहः खादति ।

siṃhaḥ khādati.

The lion eats.

But this depends on the *prayoga* of the verb. For example, consider the two sentences below. Both use *siṃhaḥ* in case 1. But the meaning of *siṃhaḥ* in each sentence is very different:

सिंहः खादति ।

siṃhaḥ khādati.

The lion eats.

(kartari prayoga. The lion is the subject (*kartā*) of the sentence.)

सिंहः खाद्यते ।

siṃhaḥ khādyate.

The lion is eaten.

(karmaṇi prayoga. The lion is the object (*karma*) of the sentence.)

Case 2 is generally the *object* of the action. It is also used for destinations:

सिंहो ग्रामं पश्यति ।

siṃho grāmaṃ paśyati.

The lion sees a village.

सिंहो ग्रामं गच्छति ।

siṃho grāmaṃ gacchati.

The lion goes to the village.

Case 3 generally means “with” or “by means of”:

सिंहो मार्गेण ग्रामं गच्छति ।

siṃho mārgēṇa grāmaṃ gacchati.

The lion goes to the village by means of the road.

Case 4 generally means “for” or “for the sake of”:

सिंहो मांसाय ग्रामं गच्छति ।

siṃho māṃsāya grāmaṃ gacchati.

The lion goes to the village for meat.

सिंहः खादनाय ग्रामं गच्छति ।

siṃhaḥ khādanāya grāmaṃ gacchati.

The lion goes to the village for eating (“to eat”).

Case 5 generally means “from,” “than,” or “because of”:

नरः वनाद् ग्रामं गच्छति ।

naraḥ vanād grāmam gacchati.

A man goes from the forest to the village.

सिंहो नराद् बलवत्तरः ।

siṃho narād balavattaraḥ.

The lion is stronger than the man.

नरः भयाद् गृहं गच्छति ।

naraḥ bhayād grham gacchati.

The man goes home from (because of) fear.

Case 6 generally means “of”:

सिंहो नरस्य गृहं गच्छति ।

siṃho narasya grham gacchati.

The lion goes to the house of the man (or, the man's house).

सिंहो नरस्य मांसं खादति ।

siṃho narasya māṃsam khādati.

The lion eats the meat of the man.

Case 7 generally means “in” or “on”:

नरो सिंहे ऽस्ति ।

naro siṃhe 'sti.

The man is in the lion.

सिंहो ग्रामे चरति ।

siṃho grāme carati.

The lion walks in the village.

And case 8 is the person being spoken to:

हे सिंह वनं गच्छ ।

he siṃha vanam gaccha.

Hey lion! Go to the forest.

Here is what these cases are called in other resources:

Our name	Sanskrit name	English name
Case 1	<i>prathamā</i> (“first”)	nominative case
Case 2	<i>dvitīyā</i> (“second”)	accusative case
Case 3	<i>tr̥tīyā</i> (“third”)	instrumental case
Case 4	<i>caturthī</i> (“fourth”)	dative case
Case 5	<i>pañcamī</i> (“fifth”)	ablative case
Case 6	<i>ṣaṣṭhī</i> (“sixth”)	genitive case
Case 7	<i>saptamī</i> (“seventh”)	locative case
Case 8	(no special name)	vocative case

Why doesn't case 8 have a special name in Sanskrit? This is a very deep question! For details, [see our *vyākaraṇa-praveśaḥ* series](#).

Stem families

Nominal stems can end with many different kinds of sounds:

सिंह

siṃha

(male) lion

अग्नि

agni

fire

मनस्

manas

mind

We can group these stems based on the last sound they use. So we can talk about -*a* stems (stems ending in *a*), -*ī* stems, -*ū* stems, and so on. We use this grouping because stems with different final sounds tend to use different endings.

For example, compare the endings we use for *siṃha* (which ends in a short *-a*) to the endings we use for *siṃhā* (which ends in a long *-ā*):

सिंह → सिंहेन

siṃha → *siṃhena*

(male) lion → by the (male) lion

सिंहा → सिंहया

siṃhā → *siṃhayā*

(female) lion → by the (female) lion

सिंह → सिंहस्य

siṃha → *siṃhasya*

(male) lion → of the (male) lion

सिंहा → सिंहायाः

siṃhā → *siṃhāyāḥ*

(female) lion → of the (female) lion

Roughly, we can combine all of these stem groups into five big **stem families**. All of the stems in a stem family tend to use similar endings. These families are:

- the *-a* stems
- the *-ā*, *-ī*, and *-ū* stems
- the *-i* and *-u* stems
- the *-ṛ* stems
- all other stems

Stem families may have some small differences, but they generally share most of their endings and follow consistent patterns.

Review

In this lesson, we learned that nominals have two parts: a *stem* and an *ending*. We also learned that nominal endings can express the following information:

- three different *genders*

- three different *numbers*
- eight different *cases*

Finally, we learned about different stem *families*. Each stem family uses slightly different endings.

In the next lesson, we will learn about the basic nominal endings. These endings are common to all stem families, so they are important to know. But before you continue, here are some questions for review:

स्त्रीलिङ्ग पुल्लिङ्ग नपुंसकलिङ्ग
एकवचनम् द्विवचनम् बहुवचनम्

1. What are the three genders and the three numbers?
2. Give the basic meanings of each of the eight cases.

प्रथमा - usually subject (कर्तरि). sometimes object (कर्मणि)

द्वितीया - object

त्रितीया - "by means of" or "with"

चतुर्थी - "for" or "to"

पञ्चमी - "from" or "than"

षष्ठी - "of"

सप्तमी - "in" or "on"

सम्बोधन - to call or address someone e.g. Oh rama! = हे राम!

Basic nominal endings

In the previous lesson, we learned that we can sort nominal stems into different families based on their last sound. Different stem families might use different endings. For example, compare the endings we use with *agni* (“fire”) and *manas* (“mind”) below:

अग्नि → अग्निना

agni → *agninā*

with the fire

मनस् → मनसा

manas → *manasā*

with the mind

Here, we can see that *agni* uses the ending *-nā* and *manas* uses the ending *-ā*. But even though these endings are different, they both end with a long *-ā* sound.

All stem families tend to use a set of **basic endings**. Different stem families will modify these basic endings in different ways. But if we know these basic endings, we can more easily understand the system as a whole.

In this lesson, we will learn about the basic endings that Sanskrit nominals tend to use.

Basic masculine and feminine endings

Here are the basic nominal endings we use for the masculine and feminine genders. These endings are the same for both genders:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	ः <i>ḥ</i>	औ <i>au</i>	अः <i>aḥ</i>
Case 2	अम् <i>am</i>	औ <i>au</i>	अः <i>aḥ</i>
Case 3	आ <i>ā</i>	भ्याम् <i>bhyām</i>	भिः <i>bhiḥ</i>
Case 4	ए <i>e</i>	भ्याम् <i>bhyām</i>	भ्यः <i>bhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	अः <i>aḥ</i>	भ्याम् <i>bhyām</i>	भ्यः <i>bhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	अः <i>aḥ</i>	ओः <i>oḥ</i>	आम् <i>ām</i>
Case 7	इ <i>i</i>	ओः <i>oḥ</i>	सु <i>su</i>
Case 8	ः <i>ḥ</i>	औ <i>au</i>	अः <i>aḥ</i>

The table above has eight rows and three columns. Each row corresponds to a different case, and each column corresponds to a different number. For example, we can use this table to learn that the “case 7 singular” ending is *i*.

Why do we put these endings in a table? Is it so that we can sit down and memorize these endings? No! In our view, that is a waste of time.

We use tables because they sometimes help us see certain patterns clearly. Specifically, notice that many of these endings are the same. For example, the same ending *bhyām* has three different meanings:

नरो गजाभ्यां नगरं गच्छति

naro gajābhyāṃ nagaram gacchati

The man goes to the city **by means of the two elephants**.

नरो गजाभ्यां नगरं गच्छति

naro gajābhyāṃ nagaram gacchati

The man goes to the city **for the two elephants**.

नरो गजाभ्यां नगरं गच्छति

naro gajābhyāṃ nagaram gacchati

The man goes **from the two elephants** to the city.

How do we decide what *bhyām* means here? We can decide what *bhyām* means only if we know the sentence's context. If we don't have that context, we must guess.

Basic neuter endings

The basic neuter endings follow an interesting pattern. In cases 3 to 7, they are identical to the endings we saw above. But in cases 1, 2, and 8, they are as you see below:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	—	एत ī	एत i
Case 2	—	एत ī	एत i
Case 8	—	एत ī	एत i

The “—” symbol means that no ending is used. More importantly, notice that all three of these cases use identical endings. This is the usual pattern for neuter endings.

Two examples

Let's study two examples of how to use these endings. We will study the feminine stem *nau*, which means “boat,” and the neuter stem *manas*, which means “mind.”

When we add endings to the stem *nau*, a few small sandhi changes apply if the ending starts with a vowel. Otherwise, *nau* is normal and predictable:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	नौः <i>nauḥ</i>	नावौ <i>nāvau</i>	नावः <i>nāvaḥ</i>
Case 2	नावम् <i>nāvam</i>	नावौ <i>nāvau</i>	नावः <i>nāvaḥ</i>
Case 3	नावा <i>nāvā</i>	नौभ्याम् <i>naubhyām</i>	नौभिः <i>naubhiḥ</i>
Case 4	नावे <i>nāve</i>	नौभ्याम् <i>naubhyām</i>	नौभ्यः <i>naubhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	नावः <i>nāvaḥ</i>	नौभ्याम् <i>naubhyām</i>	नौभ्यः <i>naubhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	नावः <i>nāvaḥ</i>	नावोः <i>nāvoḥ</i>	नावाम् <i>nāvām</i>
Case 7	नावि <i>nāvi</i>	नावोः <i>nāvoḥ</i>	नौषु <i>nauṣu</i>
Case 8	नौः <i>nauḥ</i>	नावौ <i>nāvau</i>	नावः <i>nāvaḥ</i>

Notice that *nausu* becomes *nauṣu* due to sandhi. *s* usually becomes *ṣ* when it follows a vowel other than *a* or *ā*.

Meanwhile, *manas* is a neuter stem and uses neuter endings. As before, a few small sandhi changes will apply. But otherwise, *manas* follows a regular pattern:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	मनः <i>manaḥ</i>	मनसी <i>manasī</i>	मनांसि <i>manāṃsi</i>
Case 2	मनः <i>manaḥ</i>	मनसी <i>manasī</i>	मनांसि <i>manāṃsi</i>
Case 3	मनसा <i>manasā</i>	मनोभ्याम् <i>manobhyām</i>	मनोभिः <i>manobhiḥ</i>
Case 4	मनसे <i>manase</i>	मनोभ्याम् <i>manobhyām</i>	मनोभ्यः <i>manobhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	मनसः <i>manasaḥ</i>	मनोभ्याम् <i>manobhyām</i>	मनोभ्यः <i>manobhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	मनसः <i>manasaḥ</i>	मनसोः <i>manasoḥ</i>	मनसाम् <i>manasām</i>
Case 7	मनसि <i>manasi</i>	मनसोः <i>manasoḥ</i>	मनःसु <i>manaḥsu</i>
Case 8	मनः <i>manaḥ</i>	मनसी <i>manasī</i>	मनांसि <i>manāṃsi</i>

The *s* in *manas* becomes the *visarga* if it is at the end of a word or if the ending starts with a consonant. *manaḥ* (with its *visarga*) then follows the normal rules of *visarga* sandhi:

मनस् → मनः

manas → *manaḥ*

मनस् + भ्याम् → मनस् + भ्याम् → मनोभ्याम्

manas + *bhyām* → *manas* + *bhyām* → *manobhyām*

Notice that the word *manāṃsi* has a small stem change. The stem's last vowel becomes longer, and we insert an *anusvāra* as well:

मनः → मनांसि

manaḥ → *manāṃsi*

minds

Neuter stems often change in this way. We will see many examples of this change in the following lessons.

Review

In this lesson, we learned about the basic nominal endings. We also studied two examples that use these endings: the feminine stem *nau* and the neuter stem *manas*. Finally, we learned that different stem families modify these basic endings in different ways.

In the following lessons, we will learn how each stem family modifies these basic endings.

1. Why is it useful to know the basic nominal endings? [To understand the system as a whole](#)
2. If we see a nominal ending that has multiple possible meanings, how do we decide which meaning is intended? [Context](#)
3. In the neuter gender, there are three cases that have identical endings. What are these three cases? [प्रथमा द्वितीया and सम्बोधन](#)

-a stems

In the previous lesson, we learned about the basic endings that nominal stems use. Different stem families will change these endings in small ways.

Of all of the stem families, the one that changes them the most is the family of **-a stems** (*akārantāni*, “ending in -a”). Stems in this family are either masculine or neuter.

Most of Sanskrit's nominal stems end in the vowel -a, so it's important to know this family well. Does that mean you should memorize these endings? No. Just focus on their general patterns.

Masculine endings

First, let's study the 24 masculine endings for the -a stem. Let's use the masculine noun stem *gaja*, which means “elephant”:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	गजः <i>gajāḥ</i>	गजौ <i>gajau</i>	गजाः <i>gajāḥ</i>
Case 2	गजम् <i>gajam</i>	गजौ <i>gajau</i>	गजान् <i>gajān</i>
Case 3	गजेन <i>gajena</i>	गजाभ्याम् <i>gajābhyām</i>	गजैः <i>gajaiḥ</i>
Case 4	गजाय <i>gajāya</i>	गजाभ्याम् <i>gajābhyām</i>	गजेभ्यः <i>gajebhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	गजात् <i>gajāt</i>	गजाभ्याम् <i>gajābhyām</i>	गजेभ्यः <i>gajebhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	गजस्य <i>gajasya</i>	गजयोः <i>gajayoḥ</i>	गजानाम् <i>gajānām</i>
Case 7	गजे <i>gaje</i>	गजयोः <i>gajayoḥ</i>	गजेषु <i>gajeṣu</i>
Case 8	गज <i>gaja</i>	गजौ <i>gajau</i>	गजाः <i>gajāḥ</i>

In the singular, the endings we use are very different from the basic nominal endings. Here is a comparison:

मनसा → गजेन

manasā → *gajena*

मनसे → गजाय

manase → *gajāya*

मनसः → गजात्

manasaḥ → gajāt

मनसः → गजस्य

manasaḥ → gajasya

Thankfully, the endings in the dual and plural are mostly similar to the basic endings.

Neuter endings

In the previous lesson, we learned that neuter endings and masculine endings are usually very similar. For the *-a stems*, the endings differ only in cases 1, 2, and 8.

Here is the neuter noun *phala* in cases 1, 2, and 8. In all other cases, *phala* uses the same endings as *gaja*:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	फलम् <i>phalam</i>	फले <i>phale</i>	फलानि <i>phalāni</i>
Case 2	फलम् <i>phalam</i>	फले <i>phale</i>	फलानि <i>phalāni</i>
Case 8	फल <i>phala</i>	फले <i>phale</i>	फलानि <i>phalāni</i>

These words follow the basic pattern we learned about in the previous lesson. Specifically, notice that the dual forms follow normal sandhi rules:

फल + ई → फले

phala + ī → phale

And that the word *phalāni* lengthens its vowel and uses an extra nasal sound, just as we saw with *manāṃsi*:

मनस् + इ → मनांसि

manas + i → manāṃsi

फल + इ → फलानि

phala + i → phalāni

However, one small change is that the singular of cases 1 and 2 uses the ending -*m*:

फल + म् → फलम्

phala + m → phalam

Sandhi changes

Some of the noun endings above use the consonant sound *n*. If *n* is not at the end of a word, it might change due to a complex sandhi rule:

ग्रामेन → ग्रामेण

grāmena → grāmeṇa

with the village

विषेन → विषेण

viṣena → viṣeṇa

with poison

Roughly, the rule is that the letters *r* and *ṣ* causes *n* to change to *ṇ*. This change can occur even if the two sounds are separated by vowels, “lip” consonants like *p* and *m*, and a few others.

Review

a is the most common vowel in Sanskrit, and the *-a* stems are the most common stem family. In the next few lessons, we'll learn about the other stem families.

1. Many of the endings used by the *-a* stem have multiple meanings. Give an example of one of these endings. What meanings can it express? गजौ - both पर्थमा and द्वितीया - द्विवचनम्
2. In the *-a* family, masculine and neuter endings are often identical. Which five cases are identical for both genders?

त्रितीया, चतुर्थी, पञ्चमी, षष्ठी and सप्तमी

-ā, -ī, and -ū stems

In the previous lesson, we learned about the *-a* stems, which use masculine and neuter endings. In this lesson, we'll learn about three very similar stems:

- The **-ā stems** (*ākārantāni*, “ending in -ā”)
- The **-ī stems** (*īkārantāni*, “ending in -ī”)
- The **-ū stems** (*ūkārantāni*, “ending in -ū”)

Stems that end with these sounds are almost always feminine. In particular, the *-ā* and *-ī* endings are often used as the feminine versions of stems that end in *-a*:

गज → गजा

gaja → *gajā*

(male) elephant → (female) elephant

मृग → मृगी

mṛga → *mṛgī*

(male) deer → (female) deer

Basic -ā stems

In the previous lesson, we used the masculine stem *gaja*, which means “(male) elephant,” to demonstrate the *-a* stem. Here, we will use the stem *gajā*, which means “(female) elephant,” so that the differences are clear.

As before, notice that the words in the singular use endings that are different from the others we've seen. But the words in the dual and plural mostly use endings that we've seen before:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	गजा <i>gajā</i>	गजे <i>gaje</i>	गजाः <i>gajāḥ</i>
Case 2	गजाम् <i>gajāṃ</i>	गजे <i>gaje</i>	गजाः <i>gajāḥ</i>
Case 3	गजया <i>gajayā</i>	गजाभ्याम् <i>gajābhyām</i>	गजाभिः <i>gajābhiḥ</i>
Case 4	गजायै <i>gajāyai</i>	गजाभ्याम् <i>gajābhyām</i>	गजाभ्यः <i>gajābhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	गजायाः <i>gajāyāḥ</i>	गजाभ्याम् <i>gajābhyām</i>	गजाभ्यः <i>gajābhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	गजायाः <i>gajāyāḥ</i>	गजयोः <i>gajayoh</i>	गजानाम् <i>gajānām</i>
Case 7	गजायाम् <i>gajāyām</i>	गजयोः <i>gajayoh</i>	गजासु <i>gajāsu</i>
Case 8	गजे <i>gaje</i>	गजे <i>gaje</i>	गजाः <i>gajāḥ</i>

Basic -ī stems

The -ī and -ū stems are similar to the -ā stems. But they have some small differences in the singular. In the table below, we use the feminine stem *nadī*, which means “river”:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	नदी <i>nadī</i>	नद्यौ <i>nadyau</i>	नद्यः <i>nadyaḥ</i>
Case 2	नदीम् <i>nadīm</i>	नद्यौ <i>nadyau</i>	नदीः <i>nadīḥ</i>
Case 3	नद्या <i>nadyā</i>	नदीभ्याम् <i>nadībhyām</i>	नदीभिः <i>nadībhiḥ</i>
Case 4	नद्यै <i>nadyai</i>	नदीभ्याम् <i>nadībhyām</i>	नदीभ्यः <i>nadībhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	नद्याः <i>nadyāḥ</i>	नदीभ्याम् <i>nadībhyām</i>	नदीभ्यः <i>nadībhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	नद्याः <i>nadyāḥ</i>	नद्योः <i>nadyoḥ</i>	नदीनाम् <i>nadīnām</i>
Case 7	नद्याम् <i>nadyām</i>	नद्योः <i>nadyoḥ</i>	नदीषु <i>nadīṣu</i>
Case 8	नदि <i>nadi</i>	नद्यौ <i>nadyau</i>	नद्यः <i>nadyaḥ</i>

The main difference is that the -ā stems frequently insert y between the stem and the ending:

गजया → नद्या

gajayā → *nadyā*

गजायै → नद्यै

gajāyai → *nadyai*

गजायाः → नद्याः

gajāyāḥ → nadyāḥ

गजायाम् → नद्याम्

gajāyām → nadyām

Basic -*ū* stems

The -*ū* stems follow the exact same pattern as the -*ī* stems. Where -*ī* becomes -*y* and -*i*, -*ū* becomes -*ṽ* and -*u*. The only meaningful difference is that the case 1 singular has an extra *visarga*:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	चमूः <i>camūḥ</i>	चम्वौ <i>camvau</i>	चम्वः <i>camvaḥ</i>
Case 2	चमूम् <i>camūm</i>	चम्वौ <i>camvau</i>	चमूः <i>camūḥ</i>
Case 3	चम्व्वा <i>camvā</i>	चमूभ्याम् <i>camūbhyām</i>	चमूभिः <i>camūbhiḥ</i>
Case 4	चम्वै <i>camvai</i>	चमूभ्याम् <i>camūbhyām</i>	चमूभ्यः <i>camūbhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	चम्व्वाः <i>camvāḥ</i>	चमूभ्याम् <i>camūbhyām</i>	चमूभ्यः <i>camūbhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	चम्व्वाः <i>camvāḥ</i>	चम्वोः <i>camvoḥ</i>	चमूनाम् <i>camūnām</i>
Case 7	चम्व्वाम् <i>camvām</i>	चम्वोः <i>camvoḥ</i>	चमूषु <i>camūṣu</i>
Case 8	चमु <i>camu</i>	चम्वौ <i>camvau</i>	चम्वः <i>camvaḥ</i>

Review

1. When a masculine *-a* stem becomes feminine, which stem endings does it usually use? *ā* and *ī*
2. The *-ū* stems use a *visarga* in the case 1 singular. Do we use a *visarga* in the case 1 singular of the *-ā* stems? What about the *-ī* stems?

No visarga in *ī* and *ā* stems

***-i* and *-u* stems**

So far, we have learned about two different stem families. The first, which is the family of *-a* stems, contains masculine and neuter stems. The second, which is the family of *-ā*, *-ī*, and *-ū* stems, mostly contains feminine stems.

Now we will learn about the family of ***-i*** and ***-u*** stems. These stems can be masculine, feminine, or neuter. That is, they can appear in any of the three genders.

Basic *-i* stems

In the examples below, we will use the adjective stem *śuci*, which means “shining,” “clear,” or “pure.”

First, here is the pattern for masculine stems:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	शुचिः <i>śuciḥ</i>	शुची <i>śucī</i>	शुचयः <i>śucayaḥ</i>
Case 2	शुचिम् <i>śucim</i>	शुची <i>śucī</i>	शुचीन् <i>śucīn</i>
Case 3	शुचिना <i>śucinā</i>	शुचिभ्याम् <i>śucibhyām</i>	शुचिभिः <i>śucibhiḥ</i>
Case 4	शुचये <i>śucaye</i>	शुचिभ्याम् <i>śucibhyām</i>	शुचिभ्यः <i>śucibhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	शुचेः <i>śuceḥ</i>	शुचिभ्याम् <i>śucibhyām</i>	शुचिभ्यः <i>śucibhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	शुचेः <i>śuceḥ</i>	शुच्योः <i>śucyoḥ</i>	शुचीनाम् <i>śucīnām</i>
Case 7	शुचौ <i>śucau</i>	शुच्योः <i>śucyoḥ</i>	शुचिषु <i>śuciṣu</i>
Case 8	शुचे <i>śuce</i>	शुची <i>śucī</i>	शुचयः <i>śucayaḥ</i>

The endings here are mostly similar to the basic nominal endings. But there are some important differences. For the singular forms, notice that cases 3 and 4 show slight changes. Case 3 has an extra *n* sound, and in case 4 the *i* of *śuci* strengthens to *śuce*, which then combines by normal sandhi rules:

शुचिना शुचये

śucinā śucaye

(*śuci*, singular, in cases 3 and 4)

नावा नावे

nāvā nāve

(*nau*, singular, in cases 3 and 4)

In cases 5 through 8, we have various differences with no clear pattern:

शुचेः शुचेः शुचौ शुचे

śuceḥ śuceḥ śucau śuce

(*śuci*, singular, in cases 5 through 8)

नावः नावः नावि नौः

nāvaḥ nāvaḥ nāvi nauḥ

(*nau*, singular, in cases 5 through 8)

For the dual forms, notice the long *ī* in *śucī*. And for the plural forms, notice that cases 2 and 6 resemble the *-a* stems:

शुचीन् शुचीनाम्

śucīn śucīnām

(*śuci*, plural, in cases 2 and 6)

गजान् गजानाम्

gajān gajānām

(*gaja*, plural, in cases 2 and 6)

Feminine stems follow a pattern similar to the masculine stems. But in cases 4 through 7, they can optionally behave as if they end with *-ī*:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	शुचिः <i>śuciḥ</i>	शुची <i>śucī</i>	शुचयः <i>śucayaḥ</i>
Case 2	शुचिम् <i>śucim</i>	शुची <i>śucī</i>	शुचीः <i>śucīḥ</i>
Case 3	शुचिना <i>śucinā</i>	शुचिभ्याम् <i>śucibhyām</i>	शुचिभिः <i>śucibhiḥ</i>
Case 4	शुचये, शुच्यै <i>śucaye, śucyai</i>	शुचिभ्याम् <i>śucibhyām</i>	शुचिभ्यः <i>śucibhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	शुचेः, शुच्याः <i>śuceḥ, śucyāḥ</i>	शुचिभ्याम् <i>śucibhyām</i>	शुचिभ्यः <i>śucibhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	शुचेः, शुच्याः <i>śuceḥ, śucyāḥ</i>	शुच्योः <i>śucyoḥ</i>	शुचीनाम् <i>śucīnām</i>
Case 7	शुचौ, शुच्याम् <i>śucau, śucyām</i>	शुच्योः <i>śucyoḥ</i>	शुचिषु <i>śuciṣu</i>
Case 8	शुचे <i>śuce</i>	शुची <i>śucī</i>	शुचयः <i>śucayaḥ</i>

Note that the case 2 feminine plural is *śucīḥ* as opposed to the masculine *śucīn*.

The neuter stem uses the basic nominal endings. But if an ending starts with a vowel, we add an extra *n* sound. We also use *-īnām* with a long *-ī*, just as we did above:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	शुचि <i>śuci</i>	शुचिनी <i>śucinī</i>	शुचीनि <i>śucīni</i>
Case 2	शुचि <i>śuci</i>	शुचिनी <i>śucinī</i>	शुचीनि <i>śucīni</i>
Case 3	शुचिना <i>śucinā</i>	शुचिभ्याम् <i>śucibhyām</i>	शुचिभिः <i>śucibhiḥ</i>
Case 4	शुचिने <i>śucine</i>	शुचिभ्याम् <i>śucibhyām</i>	शुचिभ्यः <i>śucibhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	शुचिनः <i>śucinaḥ</i>	शुचिभ्याम् <i>śucibhyām</i>	शुचिभ्यः <i>śucibhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	शुचिनः <i>śucinaḥ</i>	शुचिनोः <i>śucinoḥ</i>	शुचीनाम् <i>śucīnām</i>
Case 7	शुचिनि <i>śucini</i>	शुचिनोः <i>śucinoḥ</i>	शुचिषु <i>śuciṣu</i>
Case 8	शुचि <i>śuci</i>	शुचिनी <i>śucinī</i>	शुचीनि <i>śucīni</i>

Again, notice that the neuter stem uses a long vowel with an extra nasal sound:

मनस् + इ → मनांसि

manas + i → manāṃsi

फल + इ → फलानि

phala + i → phalāni

शुचि + इ → शुचीनि

śuci + i → śucīni

Basic -u stems

In the examples below, we will use the adjective stem *madhu*, which means “sweet.” If used in the neuter gender, it can also mean “honey.”

The masculine endings follow the same pattern as the -i endings we saw above. Where -i becomes *y* or *ay* or *e*, -u becomes *v* or *av* or *o*:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	मधुः <i>madhuḥ</i>	मधू <i>madhū</i>	मधवः <i>madhavaḥ</i>
Case 2	मधुम् <i>madhum</i>	मधू <i>madhū</i>	मधून् <i>madhūn</i>
Case 3	मधुना <i>madhunā</i>	मधुभ्याम् <i>madhubhyām</i>	मधुभिः <i>madhubhiḥ</i>
Case 4	मधवे <i>madhave</i>	मधुभ्याम् <i>madhubhyām</i>	मधुभ्यः <i>madhubhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	मधोः <i>madhoḥ</i>	मधुभ्याम् <i>madhubhyām</i>	मधुभ्यः <i>madhubhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	मधोः <i>madhoḥ</i>	मध्वोः <i>madhvoḥ</i>	मधूनाम् <i>madhūnām</i>
Case 7	मधौ <i>madhau</i>	मध्वोः <i>madhvoḥ</i>	मधुषु <i>madhuṣu</i>
Case 8	मधो <i>madho</i>	मधू <i>madhū</i>	मधवः <i>madhavaḥ</i>

But note that the case 7 singular is -au for both -i stems and -u stems:

शुचौ

śucau

in the clean (thing)

मधौ

madhau

in the sweet (thing)

The feminine endings are similar to the endings we saw above. This includes the optional forms in the singular of cases 4 to 7, which might act like *-ū* stems:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	मधुः <i>madhuḥ</i>	मधू <i>madhū</i>	मधवः <i>madhavaḥ</i>
Case 2	मधुम् <i>madhum</i>	मधू <i>madhū</i>	मधूः <i>madhūḥ</i>
Case 3	मधुना <i>madhunā</i>	मधुभ्याम् <i>madhubhyām</i>	मधुभिः <i>madhubhiḥ</i>
Case 4	मधवे <i>madhave</i>	मधुभ्याम् <i>madhubhyām</i>	मधुभ्यः <i>madhubhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	मधोः, मध्वाः <i>madhoḥ, madhvāḥ</i>	मधुभ्याम् <i>madhubhyām</i>	मधुभ्यः <i>madhubhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	मधोः, मध्वाः <i>madhoḥ, madhvāḥ</i>	मध्वोः <i>madhvoḥ</i>	मधूनाम् <i>madhūnām</i>
Case 7	मधौ, मध्वाम् <i>madhau, madhvām</i>	मध्वोः <i>madhvoḥ</i>	मधुषु <i>madhuṣu</i>
Case 8	मधो <i>madho</i>	मधू <i>madhū</i>	मधवः <i>madhavaḥ</i>

Like before, note that the case 2 feminine plural is *madhūḥ* as opposed to the masculine *madhūn*.

The neuter endings are again similar to what we saw above:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	मधु <i>madhu</i>	मधुनी <i>madhuni</i>	मधूनि <i>madhūni</i>
Case 2	मधु <i>madhu</i>	मधुनी <i>madhuni</i>	मधूनि <i>madhūni</i>
Case 3	मधुना <i>madhunā</i>	मधुभ्याम् <i>madhubhyām</i>	मधुभिः <i>madhubhiḥ</i>
Case 4	मधुने <i>madhune</i>	मधुभ्याम् <i>madhubhyām</i>	मधुभ्यः <i>madhubhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	मधुनः <i>madhunaḥ</i>	मधुभ्याम् <i>madhubhyām</i>	मधुभ्यः <i>madhubhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	मधुनः <i>madhunaḥ</i>	मधुनोः <i>madhunoḥ</i>	मधूनाम् <i>madhūnām</i>
Case 7	मधुनि <i>madhuni</i>	मधुनोः <i>madhunoḥ</i>	मधुषु <i>madhuṣu</i>
Case 8	मधु <i>madhu</i>	मधुनी <i>madhuni</i>	मधूनि <i>madhūni</i>

Review

If you are tempted to memorize these endings, we urge you instead to work on acquisition.

1. The feminine *-i* and *-u* have optional forms for certain cases and numbers.
Which cases and numbers?

Cases 4 to 7

-ṛ stems

Our fourth stem family is the family of **-ṛ stems**, which are usually masculine or neuter. These stems mostly use the basic nominal endings. But unlike the stems we have seen so far, these stems will *change* in certain cases and numbers. These changes occur only for the masculine stem.

For example, consider the stem *karṭṛ*, which means “doer” or “maker.” Suppose we use the stem *karṭṛ* in the masculine gender. In cases 1, 2, and 8 (except for the case 2 plural), the stem becomes *kartār* instead, and the final *-r* is dropped in the case 1 singular.

Many of the stems that end with consonants change similarly. These changed stems are often called **strong stems**, and the others are called **weak stems**. In the table below, all of the strong stems are highlighted:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	कर्ता <i>kartā</i>	कर्तारौ <i>kartārau</i>	कर्तारः <i>kartārah</i>
Case 2	कर्तारम् <i>kartāram</i>	कर्तारौ <i>kartārau</i>	कर्तृन् <i>kartṛn</i>
Case 3	कर्त्रा <i>kartrā</i>	कर्तृभ्याम् <i>karṛbhyām</i>	कर्तृभिः <i>karṛbhiḥ</i>
Case 4	कर्त्रे <i>kartre</i>	कर्तृभ्याम् <i>karṛbhyām</i>	कर्तृभ्यः <i>karṛbhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	कर्तुः <i>kartuḥ</i>	कर्तृभ्याम् <i>karṛbhyām</i>	कर्तृभ्यः <i>karṛbhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	कर्तुः <i>kartuḥ</i>	कर्त्रोः <i>kartroḥ</i>	कर्तृणाम् <i>kartṛṇām</i>
Case 7	कर्तारि <i>kartari</i>	कर्त्रोः <i>kartroḥ</i>	कर्तृषु <i>karṛṣu</i>
Case 8	कर्तः <i>kartaḥ</i>	कर्तारौ <i>kartārau</i>	कर्तारः <i>kartārah</i>

As for the endings used by this stem, we have only a few comments to make. In the singular, notice the use of *kartuḥ* for cases 5 and 6. The case 7 singular, *kartari*, uses the normal ending but with a different stem.

In the plural, notice the use of *kartṛn* and *kartṛṇām*, which resemble the other masculine endings we've seen:

कर्तृन्, कर्तृणाम्

kartṛn, kartṛṇām

(*karṛ*, plural, in cases 2 and 6)

गजान्, गजानाम्

gajān, gajānām

(*gaja*, plural, in cases 2 and 6)

शुचीन्, शुचीनाम्

śucīn, śucīnām

(*śuci*, plural, in cases 2 and 6)

मधून्, मधूनाम्

madhūn, madhūnām

(*madhu*, plural, in cases 2 and 6)

Finally, notice that the case 8 singular is *kartaḥ*. Here, the original form is *kartar*, which becomes *kartaḥ* due to sandhi. *kartaḥ* and a word like *rāmaḥ* mostly follow the same sandhi rules. But where *rāmaḥ* would become *rāmo*, *kartaḥ* becomes *kartar*:

रामः नगरम् गच्छति → रामो नगरं गच्छति

rāmaḥ nagaram gacchati → rāmo nagaram gacchati

Rama goes to the city.

कर्तृः नगरम् गच्छ → कर्तृ नगरं गच्छ

kartaḥ nagaram gaccha → kartar nagaram gaccha

O doer, go to the city.

Here are the neuter endings for the *-r* stems:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	कर्तृ <i>kartṛ</i>	कर्तृणी <i>kartṛṇī</i>	कर्तृणि <i>kartṛṇi</i>
Case 2	कर्तृ <i>kartṛ</i>	कर्तृणी <i>kartṛṇī</i>	कर्तृणि <i>kartṛṇi</i>
Case 8	कर्तृ <i>kartṛ</i>	कर्तृणी <i>kartṛṇī</i>	कर्तृणि <i>kartṛṇi</i>

These follow the same kinds of patterns we've seen before.

Family words

Many *-r* stems refer to different family members. The four examples below use the words *pitr*, *mātr*, *bhrātṛ*, and *svasṛ*:

दशरथो रामस्य पिता ।

daśaratho rāmasya pitā.

Dasharatha is Rama's **father**.

कौसल्या रामस्य माता ।

kausalyā rāmasya mātā.

Kausalya is Rama's **mother**.

लक्ष्मणो रामस्य भ्राता ।

lakṣmaṇo rāmasya bhrātā.

Lakshmana is Rama's **brother**.

रामस्य न स्वसा ।

rāmasya na svasā.

Rama doesn't have a **sister**.

Most of these words use *-ar* instead of *-ār* for their strong stem:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	पिता <i>pitā</i>	पितरौ <i>pitarau</i>	पितरः <i>pitaraḥ</i>
Case 2	पितरम् <i>pitaram</i>	पितरौ <i>pitarau</i>	पितृन् <i>pitṛn</i>
Case 3	पित्रा <i>pitṛā</i>	पितृभ्याम् <i>pitṛbhyām</i>	पितृभिः <i>pitṛbhiḥ</i>
Case 4	पित्रे <i>pitṛe</i>	पितृभ्याम् <i>pitṛbhyām</i>	पितृभ्यः <i>pitṛbhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	पितुः <i>pituh</i>	पितृभ्याम् <i>pitṛbhyām</i>	पितृभ्यः <i>pitṛbhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	पितुः <i>pituh</i>	पित्रोः <i>pitroḥ</i>	पितृणाम् <i>pitṛṇām</i>
Case 7	पितरि <i>pitari</i>	पित्रोः <i>pitroḥ</i>	पितृषु <i>pitṛṣu</i>
Case 8	पितः <i>pitah</i>	पितरौ <i>pitarau</i>	पितरः <i>pitaraḥ</i>

The feminine stem *mātr̥* uses *mātr̥ḥ* in the case 2 plural. Otherwise, it uses the same endings as *pitṛ*:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	माता <i>mātā</i>	मातरौ <i>mātarau</i>	मातरः <i>mātarah</i>
Case 2	मातरम् <i>mātaram</i>	मातरौ <i>mātarau</i>	मातृः <i>mātr̥ḥ</i>
Case 3	मात्रा <i>mātrā</i>	मातृभ्याम् <i>mātr̥bhyām</i>	मातृभिः <i>mātr̥bhiḥ</i>
Case 4	मात्रे <i>mātre</i>	मातृभ्याम् <i>mātr̥bhyām</i>	मातृभ्यः <i>mātr̥bhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	मातुः <i>mātuḥ</i>	मातृभ्याम् <i>mātr̥bhyām</i>	मातृभ्यः <i>mātr̥bhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	मातुः <i>mātuḥ</i>	मात्रोः <i>mātroḥ</i>	मातृणाम् <i>mātr̥ṇām</i>
Case 7	मातरि <i>mātari</i>	मात्रोः <i>mātroḥ</i>	मातृषु <i>mātr̥ṣu</i>
Case 8	मातः <i>mātaḥ</i>	मातरौ <i>mātarau</i>	मातरः <i>mātarah</i>

However, *svasṛ* uses the normal strong stem (*svasār*). Here are the cases that differ from *mātr̥* above:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	स्वसा <i>svasā</i>	स्वसारौ <i>svasārau</i>	स्वसारः <i>svasārah</i>
Case 2	स्वसारम् <i>svasāram</i>	स्वसारौ <i>svasārau</i>	स्वसृः <i>svasṛḥ</i>
Case 8	स्वसः <i>svasaḥ</i>	स्वसारौ <i>svasārau</i>	स्वसारः <i>svasārah</i>

Review

We are almost done with our study of the major stem families.

1. What is the strong stem of *kartr*? *kartār* कर्तार्
2. What is the strong stem of *pitr*? *pitar* पितर्
3. What is the strong stem of *vasr*? *vasār* स्वसार्

-ai, -o, and -au stems

There are only a few stems that end in the vowels *-ai*, *-o*, or *-au*. They generally use the basic nominal endings we've seen.

-ai stems

The main example of an *-ai* stem is the masculine stem *rai*, which means “wealth” or “prosperity.” If its ending starts with a vowel, it stays the same. Otherwise, it becomes *rā*:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	राः <i>rāḥ</i>	रायौ <i>rāyau</i>	रायः <i>rāyaḥ</i>
Case 2	रायम् <i>rāyam</i>	रायौ <i>rāyau</i>	रायः <i>rāyaḥ</i>
Case 3	राया <i>rāyā</i>	राभ्याम् <i>rābhyām</i>	राभिः <i>rābhiḥ</i>
Case 4	राये <i>rāye</i>	राभ्याम् <i>rābhyām</i>	राभ्यः <i>rābhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	रायः <i>rāyaḥ</i>	राभ्याम् <i>rābhyām</i>	राभ्यः <i>rābhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	रायः <i>rāyaḥ</i>	रायोः <i>rāyoḥ</i>	रायाम् <i>rāyām</i>
Case 7	रायि <i>rāyi</i>	रायोः <i>rāyoḥ</i>	राषु <i>rāṣu</i>
Case 8	राः <i>rāḥ</i>	रायौ <i>rāyau</i>	रायः <i>rāyaḥ</i>

-o stems

The two common -o stems are *go* (“cow”) and *dyo* (“sky”, “heaven”). *go* can be either masculine or feminine according to the animal's gender. And *dyo* is always feminine.

The -o stems generally use the basic endings, but they make many small changes, as well. You can see their endings below:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	गौः <i>gauḥ</i>	गावौ <i>gāvau</i>	गावः <i>gāvaḥ</i>
Case 2	गाम् <i>gām</i>	गावौ <i>gāvau</i>	गाः <i>gāḥ</i>
Case 3	गवा <i>gavā</i>	गोभ्याम् <i>gobhyām</i>	गोभिः <i>gobhiḥ</i>
Case 4	गवे <i>gave</i>	गोभ्याम् <i>gobhyām</i>	गोभ्यः <i>gobhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	गोः <i>goḥ</i>	गोभ्याम् <i>gobhyām</i>	गोभ्यः <i>gobhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	गोः <i>goḥ</i>	गवोः <i>gavoḥ</i>	गवाम् <i>gavām</i>
Case 7	गवि <i>gavi</i>	गवोः <i>gavoḥ</i>	गोषु <i>goṣu</i>
Case 8	गौः <i>gauḥ</i>	गावौ <i>gāvau</i>	गावः <i>gāvaḥ</i>

-au stems

The main example of an *-au* stem is the feminine stem *nau*, which means “boat.” *nau* uses the normal endings and uses normal sandhi changes.

We learned about the stem *nau* when we studied the basic nominal endings. But for convenience, we will repeat it here:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	नौः <i>nauḥ</i>	नावौ <i>nāvau</i>	नावः <i>nāvaḥ</i>
Case 2	नावम् <i>nāvam</i>	नावौ <i>nāvau</i>	नावः <i>nāvaḥ</i>
Case 3	नावा <i>nāvā</i>	नौभ्याम् <i>naubhyām</i>	नौभिः <i>naubhiḥ</i>
Case 4	नावे <i>nāve</i>	नौभ्याम् <i>naubhyām</i>	नौभ्यः <i>naubhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	नावः <i>nāvaḥ</i>	नौभ्याम् <i>naubhyām</i>	नौभ्यः <i>naubhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	नावः <i>nāvaḥ</i>	नावोः <i>nāvoḥ</i>	नावाम् <i>nāvām</i>
Case 7	नावि <i>nāvi</i>	नावोः <i>nāvoḥ</i>	नौषु <i>nauṣu</i>
Case 8	नौः <i>nauḥ</i>	नावौ <i>nāvau</i>	नावः <i>nāvaḥ</i>

Review

1. Which stems end in -ai? रै
2. Which stems end in -o? गो
3. Which stems end in -au? नौ

Consonant stems

Consonant stems are the last of the major families of nominal stems. As you might guess, these stems end in consonants.

Consonant stems use the basic nominal endings we saw earlier. But some consonant stems have strong and weak versions that they use in front of different endings, just as the *-ṛ* stems do. And since these stems end in consonants, various sandhi changes might occur.

As a reminder, we use the strong stem in cases 1, 2 and 8 (except for the plural of case 2) and the weak stem everywhere else.

Basic consonant stems

Many consonant stems have strong and weak versions. But there ^{are} also many that use just one version for all endings. Let's quickly learn about these *basic* consonant stems, which use the same version with all endings.

Here are the forms of the masculine stem *marut*, which means “wind.” Apart from some sandhi changes, all of these forms are regular:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	मरुत् <i>marut</i>	मरुतौ <i>marutau</i>	मरुतः <i>marutaḥ</i>
Case 2	मरुतम् <i>marutam</i>	मरुतौ <i>marutau</i>	मरुतः <i>marutaḥ</i>
Case 3	मरुता <i>marutā</i>	मरुद्भ्याम् <i>marudbhyām</i>	मरुद्भिः <i>marudbhiḥ</i>
Case 4	मरुते <i>marute</i>	मरुद्भ्याम् <i>marudbhyām</i>	मरुद्भ्यः <i>marudbhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	मरुतः <i>marutaḥ</i>	मरुद्भ्याम् <i>marudbhyām</i>	मरुद्भ्यः <i>marudbhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	मरुतः <i>marutaḥ</i>	मरुतोः <i>marutoḥ</i>	मरुताम् <i>marutām</i>
Case 7	मरुति <i>maruti</i>	मरुतोः <i>marutoḥ</i>	मरुत्सु <i>marutsu</i>
Case 8	मरुत् <i>marut</i>	मरुतौ <i>marutau</i>	मरुतः <i>marutaḥ</i>

Likewise, here are the forms of the neuter stem *manas*, which means “mind.” All of these forms use the basic nominal endings:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	मनः <i>manah</i>	मनसी <i>manasī</i>	मनांसि <i>manāṃsi</i>
Case 2	मनः <i>manah</i>	मनसी <i>manasī</i>	मनांसि <i>manāṃsi</i>
Case 3	मनसा <i>manasā</i>	मनोभ्याम् <i>manobhyām</i>	मनोभिः <i>manobhiḥ</i>
Case 4	मनसे <i>manase</i>	मनोभ्याम् <i>manobhyām</i>	मनोभ्यः <i>manobhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	मनसः <i>manasaḥ</i>	मनोभ्याम् <i>manobhyām</i>	मनोभ्यः <i>manobhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	मनसः <i>manasaḥ</i>	मनसोः <i>manasoḥ</i>	मनसाम् <i>manasām</i>
Case 7	मनसि <i>manasi</i>	मनसोः <i>manasoḥ</i>	मनःसु <i>manaḥsu</i>
Case 8	मनः <i>manah</i>	मनसी <i>manasī</i>	मनांसि <i>manāṃsi</i>

-at, -mat, and -vat

Many of the words that end in *at* are created with the suffixes **-at**, **-mat**, and **-vat**.

at is a root suffix. When we attach it to a root that means “X,” we get a stem that means “(someone who is) X-ing”:

पश्यत्

paśyat

(someone who is) seeing

अहम् सिंहं पश्यन् धावामि ।

aham siṃhaṃ paśyan dhāvāmi.

I, **seeing** the lion, run.

And *-mat* and *-vat* are nominal suffixes that mean “possessing X”:

भगवत्

bhagavat

having glory or fortune; glorious, fortunate, blessed

हनुमत्

hanumat

having (prominent) jaws; Hanuman

Generally, all of these stems use the same endings. The strong stem is *-ant*, and the weak stem is *-at*.

Here are the masculine forms of the adjective *bhagavat*, which means “blessed” or “fortunate”:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	भगवान् <i>bhagavān</i>	भगवन्तौ <i>bhagavantau</i>	भगवन्तः <i>bhagavantaḥ</i>
Case 2	भगवन्तम् <i>bhagavantam</i>	भगवन्तौ <i>bhagavantau</i>	भगवतः <i>bhagavataḥ</i>
Case 3	भगवता <i>bhagavatā</i>	भगवद्भ्याम् <i>bhagavadbhyām</i>	भगवद्भिः <i>bhagavadbhiḥ</i>
Case 4	भगवते <i>bhagavate</i>	भगवद्भ्याम् <i>bhagavadbhyām</i>	भगवद्भ्यः <i>bhagavadbhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	भगवतः <i>bhagavataḥ</i>	भगवद्भ्याम् <i>bhagavadbhyām</i>	भगवद्भ्यः <i>bhagavadbhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	भगवतः <i>bhagavataḥ</i>	भगवतोः <i>bhagavatoḥ</i>	भगवताम् <i>bhagavatām</i>
Case 7	भगवति <i>bhagavati</i>	भगवतोः <i>bhagavatoḥ</i>	भगवत्सु <i>bhagavatsu</i>
Case 8	भगवन् <i>bhagavan</i>	भगवन्तौ <i>bhagavantau</i>	भगवन्तः <i>bhagavantaḥ</i>

As before, the strong stems are highlighted. Notice the long vowel in the case 1 singular (*bhagavān*) and the short vowel in the case 8 singular (*bhagavan*).

One small exception is that the case 1 singular of *-at* is *-an*, not *-ān*:

हनुमन् → हनुमान्

hanuman → *hanumān*

Hanuman (case 1 singular)

गच्छत् → गच्छन्

gacchat → *gacchan*

while going (case 1 singular)

Next, here are the neuter endings of *bhagavat*:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	भगवत् <i>bhagavat</i>	भगवती <i>bhagavatī</i>	भगवन्ति <i>bhagavanti</i>
Case 2	भगवत् <i>bhagavat</i>	भगवती <i>bhagavatī</i>	भगवन्ति <i>bhagavanti</i>
Case 8	भगवत् <i>bhagavat</i>	भगवती <i>bhagavatī</i>	भगवन्ति <i>bhagavanti</i>

For the feminine, we usually use the endings *-antī*, *-vatī*, and *-matī*. We then use the normal endings for *-ī* stems.

Roots in the *hu* class will use *-atī* instead of *-antī*. What is the *hu* class? See our lesson on verb classes for more information.

-an*, *-man*, and *-van

These stems are formed with the suffixes *-an*, *-man*, or *-van*. The strong stem is *-ān* and the weak stem is *-a*. But if the ending starts with a vowel, we use *-an*.

Here are the forms of the masculine stem *ātman*, which means “self”:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	आत्मा <i>ātmā</i>	आत्मानौ <i>ātmānau</i>	आत्मानः <i>ātmānaḥ</i>
Case 2	आत्मानम् <i>ātmānam</i>	आत्मानौ <i>ātmānau</i>	आत्मनः <i>ātmanaḥ</i>
Case 3	आत्मना <i>ātmanā</i>	आत्मभ्याम् <i>ātmabhyām</i>	आत्मभिः <i>ātmabhiḥ</i>
Case 4	आत्मने <i>ātmane</i>	आत्मभ्याम् <i>ātmabhyām</i>	आत्मभ्यः <i>ātmabhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	आत्मनः <i>ātmanaḥ</i>	आत्मभ्याम् <i>ātmabhyām</i>	आत्मभ्यः <i>ātmabhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	आत्मनः <i>ātmanaḥ</i>	आत्मनोः <i>ātmanoḥ</i>	आत्मनाम् <i>ātmanām</i>
Case 7	आत्मनि <i>ātmani</i>	आत्मनोः <i>ātmanoḥ</i>	आत्मसु <i>ātmasu</i>
Case 8	आत्मन् <i>ātman</i>	आत्मानौ <i>ātmānau</i>	आत्मानः <i>ātmānaḥ</i>

Note that the case 1 singular is *ātmā* and has no final *-n* sound.

Here are forms of the neuter stem *karman*, which roughly means “action”:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	कर्म <i>karma</i>	कर्मणी <i>karmaṇī</i>	कर्माणि <i>karmāṇi</i>
Case 2	कर्म <i>karma</i>	कर्मणी <i>karmaṇī</i>	कर्माणि <i>karmāṇi</i>
Case 8	कर्म <i>karma</i>	कर्मणी <i>karmaṇī</i>	कर्माणि <i>karmāṇi</i>

Note the change from *n* to *ṇ*, which is caused by a sandhi rule.

-in, -min, and -vin

These stems are formed with the suffixes ***-in***, ***-min***, or ***-vin***. The strong stem is *-in* and the weak stem is *-i*. But if the ending starts with a vowel, we use *-in* instead.

Here are the forms of the masculine stem *yogin*, which means “yogi”:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	योगी <i>yogī</i>	योगिनौ <i>yoginau</i>	योगिनः <i>yoginaḥ</i>
Case 2	योगिनम् <i>yoginam</i>	योगिनौ <i>yoginau</i>	योगिनः <i>yoginaḥ</i>
Case 3	योगिना <i>yoginā</i>	योगिभ्याम् <i>yogibhyām</i>	योगिभिः <i>yogibhiḥ</i>
Case 4	योगिने <i>yogine</i>	योगिभ्याम् <i>yogibhyām</i>	योगिभ्यः <i>yogibhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	योगिनः <i>yoginaḥ</i>	योगिभ्याम् <i>yogibhyām</i>	योगिभ्यः <i>yogibhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	योगिनः <i>yoginaḥ</i>	योगिनोः <i>yoginoḥ</i>	योगिनाम् <i>yoginām</i>
Case 7	योगिनि <i>yogini</i>	योगिनोः <i>yoginoḥ</i>	योगिषु <i>yogiṣu</i>
Case 8	योगिन् <i>yogin</i>	योगिनौ <i>yoginau</i>	योगिनः <i>yoginaḥ</i>

As above, note that the case 1 singular is *yogī* and has no final *-n* sound.

Here are the forms of the neuter stem:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	योगि <i>yogi</i>	योगिनी <i>yoginī</i>	योगीनि <i>yogīni</i>
Case 2	योगि <i>yogi</i>	योगिनी <i>yoginī</i>	योगीनि <i>yogīni</i>
Case 8	योगि <i>yogi</i>	योगिनी <i>yoginī</i>	योगीनि <i>yogīni</i>

-vas, -ivas, and -yas

-vas is a root suffix. When we attach it to a root that means “X,” we usually get a stem that means “one who has X-ed.” Some roots will use the suffix *-ivas* instead.

For *-vas*, the strong stem is *-vāṃs* and the weak stem is *-uṣ*. But if the ending starts with a consonant, we use *-vat* instead. *-ivas* is similar, except that its strong stem is *-ivāṃs* and we use *-ivat* if the ending starts with a consonant.

Here are the masculine forms of the stem *vidvas*, which means “one who knows” or “a wise person”:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	विद्वान् <i>vidvān</i>	विद्वਾਂसौ <i>vidvāṃsau</i>	विद्वਾਂसः <i>vidvāṃsaḥ</i>
Case 2	विद्वਾਂसम् <i>vidvāṃsam</i>	विद्वਾਂसौ <i>vidvāṃsau</i>	विदुषः <i>viduṣaḥ</i>
Case 3	विदुषा <i>viduṣā</i>	विद्वद्भ्याम् <i>vidvadbhyām</i>	विद्वद्भिः <i>vidvadbhiḥ</i>
Case 4	विदुषे <i>viduṣe</i>	विद्वद्भ्याम् <i>vidvadbhyām</i>	विद्वद्भ्यः <i>vidvadbhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	विदुषः <i>viduṣaḥ</i>	विद्वद्भ्याम् <i>vidvadbhyām</i>	विद्वद्भ्यः <i>vidvadbhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	विदुषः <i>viduṣaḥ</i>	विदुषोः <i>viduṣoḥ</i>	विदुषाम् <i>viduṣām</i>
Case 7	विदुषि <i>viduṣi</i>	विदुषोः <i>viduṣoḥ</i>	विद्वत्सु <i>vidvatsu</i>
Case 8	विद्वन् <i>vidvan</i>	विद्वਾਂसौ <i>vidvāṃsau</i>	विद्वਾਂसः <i>vidvāṃsaḥ</i>

Here is the same stem in the neuter:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	विद्वत् <i>vidvat</i>	विदुषी <i>viduṣī</i>	विद्वांसि <i>vidvāṃsi</i>
Case 2	विद्वत् <i>vidvat</i>	विदुषी <i>viduṣī</i>	विद्वांसि <i>vidvāṃsi</i>
Case 8	विद्वत् <i>vidvat</i>	विदुषी <i>viduṣī</i>	विद्वांसि <i>vidvāṃsi</i>

-*yas* is a nominal suffix. When added to a nominal stem that means “X,” -*yas* creates a stem that means “more X.” Its strong stem is -*yāṃs* and its weak stem is -*yas*.

Here are the masculine forms of the adjective *śreyas*, which means “better”:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	श्रेयान् <i>śreyān</i>	श्रेयांसौ <i>śreyāṃsau</i>	श्रेयांसः <i>śreyāṃsaḥ</i>
Case 2	श्रेयांसम् <i>śreyāṃsam</i>	श्रेयांसौ <i>śreyāṃsau</i>	श्रेयसः <i>śreyasaḥ</i>
Case 3	श्रेयसा <i>śreyasā</i>	श्रेयोभ्याम् <i>śreyobhyām</i>	श्रेयोभिः <i>śreyobhiḥ</i>
Case 4	श्रेयसे <i>śreyase</i>	श्रेयोभ्याम् <i>śreyobhyām</i>	श्रेयोभ्यः <i>śreyobhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	श्रेयसः <i>śreyasaḥ</i>	श्रेयोभ्याम् <i>śreyobhyām</i>	श्रेयोभ्यः <i>śreyobhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	श्रेयसः <i>śreyasaḥ</i>	श्रेयसोः <i>śreyasoḥ</i>	श्रेयसाम् <i>śreyasām</i>
Case 7	श्रेयसि <i>śreyasi</i>	श्रेयसोः <i>śreyasoḥ</i>	श्रेयःसु <i>śreyaḥsu</i>
Case 8	श्रेयन् <i>śreyaṇ</i>	श्रेयांसौ <i>śreyāṃsau</i>	श्रेयांसः <i>śreyāṃsaḥ</i>

And in the neuter:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	श्रेयः <i>śreyaḥ</i>	श्रेयसी <i>śreyasī</i>	श्रेयांसि <i>śreyāṃsi</i>
Case 2	श्रेयः <i>śreyaḥ</i>	श्रेयसी <i>śreyasī</i>	श्रेयांसि <i>śreyāṃsi</i>
Case 8	श्रेयः <i>śreyaḥ</i>	श्रेयसी <i>śreyasī</i>	श्रेयांसि <i>śreyāṃsi</i>

Nominals 2: Pronouns and numbers

asmad and yuṣmad

Also known as: personal pronouns

Pronouns are words like “I,” “you,” “he,” “they,” and so on. They can often replace other nominal words:

रामो नगरं गच्छति ।

rāmo nagaram gacchati.

Rama goes to the city.

स नगरं गच्छति ।

sa nagaram gacchati.

He goes to the city.

We can often leave out a pronoun entirely if it is clear from context:

स नगरं गच्छति ।

sa nagaram gacchati.

He goes to the city.

नगरं गच्छति ।

nagaram gacchati.

(He) goes to the city.

But even so, pronouns are still expressive and useful words.

In this topic, we will learn about the common Sanskrit pronouns. Pronouns use many of the same endings as other nominals. But generally, they follow very different patterns and must be learned individually.

asmad

First, let's consider the first-person pronoun *asmad* (“I”, “we”):

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	अहम् <i>aham</i>	आवाम् <i>āvām</i>	वयम् <i>vayam</i>
Case 2	माम् <i>mām</i>	आवाम् <i>āvām</i>	अस्मान् <i>asmān</i>
Case 3	मया <i>mayā</i>	आवाभ्याम् <i>āvābhyām</i>	अस्माभिः <i>asmābhiḥ</i>
Case 4	मह्यम् <i>mahyam</i>	आवाभ्याम् <i>āvābhyām</i>	अस्मभ्यम् <i>asmabhyam</i>
Case 5	मत् <i>mat</i>	आवाभ्याम् <i>āvābhyām</i>	अस्मत् <i>asmat</i>
Case 6	मम <i>mama</i>	आवयोः <i>āvayoh</i>	अस्माकम् <i>asmākam</i>
Case 7	मयि <i>mayi</i>	आवयोः <i>āvayoh</i>	अस्मासु <i>asmāsu</i>

There are a few points worth noting here. First, notice that *asmad* does not appear in case 8. Many pronouns appear only in the first 7 cases. Next, these words use multiple different stems:

अहम्

aham

I

माम्

mām

me

आवाम्

āvām

the two of us

वयम्

vayam

me

अस्मान्

asmān

us

Also, notice that many of these words are similar to the words we use in English:

Sanskrit word	English word
अहम् <i>aham</i>	ego
माम् <i>mām</i>	me
वयम् <i>vayam</i>	we
अस्मान् <i>asmān</i>	us

yuṣmad

yuṣmad (“you”) follows the same general pattern as *asmad*:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	त्वम् <i>tvam</i>	युवाम् <i>yuvām</i>	यूयम् <i>yūyam</i>
Case 2	त्वाम् <i>tvām</i>	युवाम् <i>yuvām</i>	युष्मान् <i>yuṣmān</i>
Case 3	त्वया <i>tvayā</i>	युवाभ्याम् <i>yuvābhyām</i>	युष्माभिः <i>yuṣmābhiḥ</i>
Case 4	तुभ्यम् <i>tubhyam</i>	युवाभ्याम् <i>yuvābhyām</i>	युष्मभ्यम् <i>yuṣmabhyam</i>
Case 5	त्वत् <i>tvat</i>	युवाभ्याम् <i>yuvābhyām</i>	युष्मत् <i>yuṣmat</i>
Case 6	तव <i>tava</i>	युवयोः <i>yuvayoḥ</i>	युष्माकम् <i>yuṣmākam</i>
Case 7	त्वयि <i>tvayi</i>	युवयोः <i>yuvayoḥ</i>	युष्मासु <i>yuṣmāsu</i>

Again, note that many of these words have English counterparts:

Sanskrit word	English word
त्वम् <i>tvam</i>	thou
यूयम् <i>yūyam</i>	you

tad, etad, idam, and adas

Also known as: demonstrative pronouns

The four pronouns *tad*, *etad*, *idam*, and *adas* have similar meanings. In theory, here is how they differ:

- We use *etad* (“this”) for what is near at hand
- We use *idam* (“this”) for what is slightly further away.
- We use *adas* (“that”) for what is much further away.
- We use *tad* (“that”) for what is not present.

Below, we provide the forms for all of these pronouns in all three genders.

tad and *etad*

Here are the masculine forms for *tad*:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	सः <i>saḥ</i>	तौ <i>tau</i>	ते <i>te</i>
Case 2	तम् <i>tam</i>	तौ <i>tau</i>	तान् <i>tān</i>
Case 3	तेन <i>tena</i>	ताभ्याम् <i>tābhyām</i>	तैः <i>taiḥ</i>
Case 4	तस्मै <i>tasmai</i>	ताभ्याम् <i>tābhyām</i>	तेभ्यः <i>tebhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	तस्मात् <i>tasmāt</i>	ताभ्याम् <i>tābhyām</i>	तेभ्यः <i>tebhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	तस्य <i>tasya</i>	तयोः <i>tayoḥ</i>	तेषाम् <i>teṣām</i>
Case 7	तस्मिन् <i>tasmin</i>	तयोः <i>tayoḥ</i>	तेषु <i>teṣu</i>

Again, note that many of these words have English counterparts:

Sanskrit word	English word
तत् <i>tat</i>	that
ते <i>te</i>	they

Feminine:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	सा <i>sā</i>	ते <i>te</i>	ताः <i>tāḥ</i>
Case 2	ताम् <i>tām</i>	ते <i>te</i>	ताः <i>tāḥ</i>
Case 3	तया <i>tayā</i>	ताभ्याम् <i>tābhyām</i>	ताभिः <i>tābhiḥ</i>
Case 4	तस्यै <i>tasyai</i>	ताभ्याम् <i>tābhyām</i>	ताभ्यः <i>tābhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	तस्याः <i>tasyāḥ</i>	ताभ्याम् <i>tābhyām</i>	ताभ्यः <i>tābhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	तस्याः <i>tasyāḥ</i>	तयोः <i>tayoḥ</i>	तासाम् <i>tāsām</i>
Case 7	तस्याम् <i>tasyām</i>	तयोः <i>tayoḥ</i>	तासु <i>tāsu</i>
Neuter:			
	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	तत् <i>tat</i>	ते <i>te</i>	तानि <i>tāni</i>
Case 2	तत् <i>tat</i>	ते <i>te</i>	तानि <i>tāni</i>

To get the forms for *etad*, we add an *e-* to the beginning of each form. The only unusual changes are that *saḥ* becomes *eṣaḥ* and *sā* becomes *eṣā*. These changes are due to normal sandhi rules:

स खादति → एष खादति ।

sa khādati → *eṣa khādati*.

He eats.

सा खादति → एषा खादति ।

sā khādati → *eṣā khādati*.

She eats.

idam

Masculine:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	अयम् <i>ayam</i>	इमौ <i>imau</i>	इमे <i>ime</i>
Case 2	इमम् <i>imam</i>	इमौ <i>imau</i>	इमान् <i>imān</i>
Case 3	अनेन <i>anena</i>	आभ्याम् <i>ābhyām</i>	एभिः <i>ebhiḥ</i>
Case 4	अस्मै <i>asmai</i>	आभ्याम् <i>ābhyām</i>	एभ्यः <i>ebhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	अस्मात् <i>asmāt</i>	आभ्याम् <i>ābhyām</i>	एभ्यः <i>ebhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	अस्य <i>asya</i>	अनयोः <i>anayoḥ</i>	एषाम् <i>eṣām</i>
Case 7	अस्मिन् <i>asmin</i>	अनयोः <i>anayoḥ</i>	एषु <i>eṣu</i>

Feminine:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	इयम् <i>iyam</i>	इमे <i>ime</i>	इमाः <i>imāḥ</i>
Case 2	इमाम् <i>imām</i>	इमे <i>ime</i>	इमाः <i>imāḥ</i>
Case 3	अनया <i>anayā</i>	आभ्याम् <i>ābhyām</i>	आभिः <i>ābhiḥ</i>
Case 4	अस्यै <i>asyai</i>	आभ्याम् <i>ābhyām</i>	आभ्यः <i>ābhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	अस्याः <i>asyāḥ</i>	आभ्याम् <i>ābhyām</i>	आभ्यः <i>ābhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	अस्याः <i>asyāḥ</i>	अनयोः <i>anayoḥ</i>	आसाम् <i>āsām</i>
Case 7	अस्याम् <i>asyām</i>	अनयोः <i>anayoḥ</i>	आसु <i>āsu</i>

Neuter:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	इदम् <i>idam</i>	इमे <i>ime</i>	इमानि <i>imāni</i>
Case 2	इदम् <i>idam</i>	इमे <i>ime</i>	इमानि <i>imāni</i>

adas

Masculine:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	असौ <i>asau</i>	अमू <i>amū</i>	अमी <i>amī</i>
Case 2	अमुम् <i>amum</i>	अमू <i>amū</i>	अमून् <i>amūn</i>
Case 3	अमुना <i>amunā</i>	अमूभ्याम् <i>amūbhyām</i>	अमीभिः <i>amībhiḥ</i>
Case 4	अमुष्मै <i>amuṣmai</i>	अमूभ्याम् <i>amūbhyām</i>	अमीभ्यः <i>amībhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	अमुष्मात् <i>amuṣmāt</i>	अमूभ्याम् <i>amūbhyām</i>	अमीभ्यः <i>amībhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	अमुष्य <i>amuṣya</i>	अमुयोः <i>amuyoh</i>	अमीषाम् <i>amīṣām</i>
Case 7	अमुष्मिन् <i>amuṣmin</i>	अमुयोः <i>amuyoh</i>	अमीषु <i>amīṣu</i>

Feminine:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	असौ <i>asau</i>	अमू <i>amū</i>	अमूः <i>amūḥ</i>
Case 2	अमूम् <i>amūm</i>	अमू <i>amū</i>	अमूः <i>amūḥ</i>
Case 3	अमुया <i>amuyā</i>	अमूभ्याम् <i>amūbhyām</i>	अमूभिः <i>amūbhiḥ</i>
Case 4	अमुष्यै <i>amuṣyai</i>	अमूभ्याम् <i>amūbhyām</i>	अमूभ्यः <i>amūbhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	अमुष्याः <i>amuṣyāḥ</i>	अमूभ्याम् <i>amūbhyām</i>	अमूभ्यः <i>amūbhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	अमुष्याः <i>amuṣyāḥ</i>	अमुयोः <i>amuyoh</i>	अमूषाम् <i>amūṣām</i>
Case 7	अमुष्याम् <i>amuṣyām</i>	अमुयोः <i>amuyoh</i>	अमूषु <i>amūṣu</i>

Neuter:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	अदः <i>adaḥ</i>	अमू <i>amū</i>	अमूनि <i>amūni</i>
Case 2	अदः <i>adaḥ</i>	अमू <i>amū</i>	अमूनि <i>amūni</i>

kim and yad

Also known as: interrogative and relative pronouns

The two pronouns *kim* and *yad* let us create different kinds of complex sentences. In this lesson, we will learn more about what kinds of endings these pronouns use.

If you want to focus more on what these pronouns mean and less on their specific endings, see our *Sentences* topic.

kim

kim means “who?” or “what?” We use *kim* to ask questions:

कस् त्वम्।

kas tvam.

Who are you?

त्वं कस्मै फलं ददासि

tvam kasmai phalaṃ dadāsi

To whom are you giving the fruit?

कस्मात् रावणः सीताम् इच्छति।

kasmāt rāvaṇaḥ sītām icchati.

For what reason (from what) does Ravana want Sita?

kim uses the same endings as *tad*, but its neuter singular form in cases 1 and 2 is *kim*:

किम् एतत्?

kim etat?

What is this?

Also, the masculine case 1 singular (*kaḥ*) uses normal sandhi rules. Compare the results below:

कः योधः → को योधः

kaḥ yodhaḥ → *ko yodhaḥ*

Who is a warrior?

सः योधः → स योधः

saḥ yodhaḥ → *sa yodhaḥ*

He is a warrior.

Just for reference, here are the forms of *kim* in the masculine gender:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	कः <i>kaḥ</i>	कौ <i>kau</i>	के <i>ke</i>
Case 2	कम् <i>kam</i>	कौ <i>kau</i>	कान् <i>kān</i>
Case 3	केन <i>kena</i>	काभ्याम् <i>kābhyām</i>	कैः <i>kaiḥ</i>
Case 4	कस्मै <i>kasmai</i>	काभ्याम् <i>kābhyām</i>	केभ्यः <i>kebhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	कस्मात् <i>kasmāt</i>	काभ्याम् <i>kābhyām</i>	केभ्यः <i>kebhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	कस्य <i>kasya</i>	कयोः <i>kayoḥ</i>	केषाम् <i>keṣām</i>
Case 7	कस्मिन् <i>kasmin</i>	कयोः <i>kayoḥ</i>	केषु <i>keṣu</i>

the feminine gender:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	का <i>kā</i>	के <i>ke</i>	काः <i>kāḥ</i>
Case 2	काम् <i>kām</i>	के <i>ke</i>	काः <i>kāḥ</i>
Case 3	कया <i>kayā</i>	काभ्याम् <i>kābhyām</i>	काभिः <i>kābhiḥ</i>
Case 4	कस्यै <i>kasyai</i>	काभ्याम् <i>kābhyām</i>	काभ्यः <i>kābhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	कस्याः <i>kasyāḥ</i>	काभ्याम् <i>kābhyām</i>	काभ्यः <i>kābhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	कस्याः <i>kasyāḥ</i>	कयोः <i>kayoḥ</i>	कासाम् <i>kāsām</i>
Case 7	कस्याम् <i>kasyām</i>	कयोः <i>kayoḥ</i>	कासु <i>kāsu</i>

and the neuter gender:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	किम् <i>kim</i>	के <i>ke</i>	कानि <i>kāni</i>
Case 2	किम् <i>kim</i>	के <i>ke</i>	कानि <i>kāni</i>

-cit and -cana

We can use the suffixes **-cit** and **cana** to create a word that means “someone” or “something”:

कः पृच्छति → कश्चित् पृच्छति

kaḥ pṛcchati → *kaścit pṛcchati*

Who is asking? → **Someone** is asking.

केन श्रुतम् → केनचन श्रुतम्

kena śrutam → *kenacana śrutam*

By whom was it heard? → **By someone** it was heard.

yad

yad means “who” or “what,” but not in the sense of asking a question. Rather, *yad* lets us join sentences together.

This idea is difficult to explain but easy to understand. In the examples below, the first two sentences are simple. Then we use *yad* to connect them.

सा पृच्छति ।

sā pṛcchati.

She asks.

सा रामस्य पत्नी ।

sā rāmasya patnī.

She is Rama's wife.

या पृच्छति सा रामस्य पत्नी ।

yā pṛcchati sā rāmasya patnī.

Who asks, **she** is Rama's wife. (literal translation)

The person **who** asks is Rama's wife. (natural translation) (Note that we pair *yad* with another pronoun here.)

We can create more complex examples too:

रामः तस्यै फलं ददाति ।

rāmaḥ tasyai phalaṃ dadāti.

Rama gives a fruit to her.

सा रामस्य पत्नी ।

sā rāmasya patnī.

She is Rama's wife.

यस्यै रामः फलं ददाति सा रामस्य पत्नी

yasyai rāmaḥ phalaṃ dadāti sā rāmasya patnī

To whom Rama gives a fruit, she is Rama's wife. (literal)

The person to whom Rama gives a fruit is Rama's wife. (natural)

And even more complex examples:

रामः तस्यै फलं ददाति ।

rāmaḥ tasyai phalaṃ dadāti.

Rama gives a fruit to her.

तस्याः पिता जनकः

tasyāḥ pitā janakaḥ

Her father is Janaka.

यस्यै रामः फलं ददाति तस्याः पिता जनकः

yasyai rāmaḥ phalaṃ dadāti tasyāḥ pitā janakaḥ

To whom Rama gives a fruit, her father is Janaka. (literal)

The father of the one to whom Rama gives a fruit is Janaka. (natural)

yad uses the same endings as *tad*, but it follows normal sandhi rules. Here are the forms of *yad* with masculine endings:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	यः <i>yaḥ</i>	यौ <i>yau</i>	ये <i>ye</i>
Case 2	यम् <i>yam</i>	यौ <i>yau</i>	यान् <i>yān</i>
Case 3	येन <i>yena</i>	याभ्याम् <i>yābhyām</i>	यैः <i>yaiḥ</i>
Case 4	यस्मै <i>yasmai</i>	याभ्याम् <i>yābhyām</i>	येभ्यः <i>yebhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	यस्मात् <i>yasmāt</i>	याभ्याम् <i>yābhyām</i>	येभ्यः <i>yebhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	यस्य <i>yasya</i>	ययोः <i>yayoḥ</i>	येषाम् <i>yeṣām</i>
Case 7	यस्मिन् <i>yasmin</i>	ययोः <i>yayoḥ</i>	येषु <i>yeṣu</i>

feminine endings:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	या <i>yā</i>	ये <i>ye</i>	याः <i>yāḥ</i>
Case 2	याम् <i>yām</i>	ये <i>ye</i>	याः <i>yāḥ</i>
Case 3	यया <i>yayā</i>	याभ्याम् <i>yābhyām</i>	याभिः <i>yābhiḥ</i>
Case 4	यस्यै <i>yasyai</i>	याभ्याम् <i>yābhyām</i>	याभ्यः <i>yābhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	यस्याः <i>yasyāḥ</i>	याभ्याम् <i>yābhyām</i>	याभ्यः <i>yābhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	यस्याः <i>yasyāḥ</i>	ययोः <i>yayoh</i>	यासाम् <i>yāsām</i>
Case 7	यस्याम् <i>yasyām</i>	ययोः <i>yayoh</i>	यासु <i>yāsu</i>

and neuter endings:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	यत् <i>yat</i>	ये <i>ye</i>	यानि <i>yāni</i>
Case 2	यत् <i>yat</i>	ये <i>ye</i>	यानि <i>yāni</i>

Review

kim and *yad* can be used in complex and sophisticated ways. For details, see our *Sentences* topic.

Pronominal adjectives

There are many adjectives that use the same endings as pronouns like *tad*. We can call these adjectives **pronominal adjectives** since they are adjectives that behave like pronouns.

Here are some common examples:

पूर्व → पूर्वस्मिन् दिने
pūrva → *pūrvasmin* dine
 previous → on the **previous** day

पर → परस्मिन् दिने
para → *parasmin* dine
 next → on the **next** day

एक → एकस्मिन् दिने
eka → *ekasmin* dine
 one → on **a certain** day

अन्य → अन्यस्मिन् दिने
anya → *anyasmin* dine
 other → on **another** day

सर्व → सर्वे नराः
sarva → *sarve* narāḥ
 all → **all** men

विश्वे → विश्वे देवाः
viśve → *viśve* devāḥ
 all → **all** gods

But there is one small exception. Apart from *anya* and a few rarer stems, all of these pronominal adjectives use *-m* in the neuter singular of cases 1 and 2:

एकम् फलम्

ekam phalam

one fruit

सर्वम् उदकम्

sarvam udakam

all the water

अन्यत् फलम्

anyat phalam

another fruit

Number words

Number words are adjectives that imply a specific number of items:

पञ्च पाण्डवाः

pañca pāṇdavāḥ

the **five** sons of Pandu

Sanskrit's number words generally follow the patterns of the stems we have seen already. Many of these number words are the same regardless of the gender of the noun they describe:

पञ्च पाण्डवाः

pañca pāṇdavāḥ

the five sons of Pandu (masculine)

पञ्च फलानि

pañca phalāni

five fruits (neuter)

पञ्च नद्यः

pañca nadyaḥ

five rivers (feminine)

In this lesson, we'll learn about Sanskrit's number words and how to use them.

eka

eka (“one”) uses the normal pronoun endings. When *eka* refers to one item, it uses the singular. But *eka* can also be used in the sense of “a small number” or “a few” of something. When *eka* has this meaning, it is used in the dual and plural.

Here are the forms of *eka* in the masculine gender:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	एकः <i>ekaḥ</i>	एकौ <i>ekau</i>	एके <i>eke</i>
Case 2	एकम् <i>ekam</i>	एकौ <i>ekau</i>	एकान् <i>ekān</i>
Case 3	एकेन <i>ekena</i>	एकाभ्याम् <i>ekābhyām</i>	एकैः <i>ekaiḥ</i>
Case 4	एकस्मै <i>ekasmai</i>	एकाभ्याम् <i>ekābhyām</i>	एकैः <i>ekaiḥ</i>
Case 5	एकस्मात् <i>ekasmāt</i>	एकाभ्याम् <i>ekābhyām</i>	एकेभ्यः <i>ekebhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	एकस्य <i>ekasya</i>	एकयोः <i>ekayoḥ</i>	एकानाम् <i>ekānām</i>
Case 7	एकस्मिन् <i>ekasmin</i>	एकयोः <i>ekayoḥ</i>	एकेषु <i>ekeṣu</i>

dvi

dvi (“two”) is used only in the dual. The stem *dvi* is used in compounds and certain suffixes, but when we add endings, we actually use the stem *dva* stem (or *dvā* for the feminine) instead.

Here are the masculine endings for *dvi*:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	—	द्वौ <i>dvau</i>	—
Case 2	—	द्वौ <i>dvau</i>	—
Case 3	—	द्वाभ्याम् <i>dvābhyām</i>	—
Case 4	—	द्वाभ्याम् <i>dvābhyām</i>	—
Case 5	—	द्वाभ्याम् <i>dvābhyām</i>	—
Case 6	—	द्वयोः <i>dvayoh</i>	—
Case 7	—	द्वयोः <i>dvayoh</i>	—

tri

tri is always used in the plural. In the masculine, it uses the normal *-i* stem endings, except that the case 6 plural is *trayāṇām*:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	—	—	त्रयः <i>trayaḥ</i>
Case 2	—	—	त्रीन् <i>trīn</i>
Case 3	—	—	त्रिभिः <i>tribhiḥ</i>
Case 4	—	—	त्रिभ्यः <i>tribhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	—	—	त्रिभ्यः <i>tribhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	—	—	त्रयाणाम् <i>trayāṇām</i>
Case 7	—	—	त्रिषु <i>triṣu</i>
Case 8	—	—	त्रयः <i>trayaḥ</i>

The feminine form of *tri* uses the stem *tisṛ* with the basic nominal endings. But in the case 6 plural, it uses the ending *-ṇām* instead:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	—	—	तिस्रः <i>tisraḥ</i>
Case 2	—	—	तिस्रः <i>tisraḥ</i>
Case 3	—	—	तिसृभिः <i>tisṛbhiḥ</i>
Case 4	—	—	तिसृभ्यः <i>tisṛbhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	—	—	तिसृभ्यः <i>tisṛbhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	—	—	तिसृणाम् <i>tisṛṇām</i>
Case 7	—	—	तिसृषु <i>tisṛṣu</i>
Case 8	—	—	तिस्रः <i>tisraḥ</i>

Finally, the neuter follows the usual pattern of the *-i* stems:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	—	—	त्रीणि <i>trīṇi</i>
Case 2	—	—	त्रीणि <i>trīṇi</i>
Case 8	—	—	त्रीणि <i>trīṇi</i>

catur

catur (“four”) uses the strong stem *catvār* in cases 1 and 8. Otherwise, it generally uses the basic nominal endings:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	—	—	चत्वारः <i>catvāraḥ</i>
Case 2	—	—	चतुरः <i>caturaḥ</i>
Case 3	—	—	चतुर्भिः <i>caturbhiḥ</i>
Case 4	—	—	चतुर्भ्यः <i>caturbhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	—	—	चतुर्भ्यः <i>caturbhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	—	—	चतुर्णाम् <i>caturṇām</i>
Case 7	—	—	चतुर्षु <i>caturṣu</i>
Case 8	—	—	चत्वारः <i>catvāraḥ</i>

In the feminine, *catur* uses the feminine stem *catasṛ*. This stem is used like *tisṛ* above:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	—	—	चतस्रः <i>catasraḥ</i>
Case 2	—	—	चतस्रः <i>catasraḥ</i>
Case 3	—	—	चतसृभिः <i>catasṛbhiḥ</i>
Case 4	—	—	चतसृभ्यः <i>catasṛbhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	—	—	चतसृभ्यः <i>catasṛbhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	—	—	चतसृणाम् <i>catasṛṇām</i>
Case 7	—	—	चतसृषु <i>catasṛṣu</i>
Case 8	—	—	चतस्रः <i>catasraḥ</i>

The neuter endings are below. In this neuter form, we lengthen the last vowel of the stem, but we don't insert a new nasal sound:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	—	—	चत्वारि <i>catvāri</i>
Case 2	—	—	चत्वारि <i>catvāri</i>
Case 8	—	—	चत्वारि <i>catvāri</i>

pañcan* to *daśan

The numbers ***pañcan*** (“five”) to ***daśan*** (“ten”) use the same forms regardless of gender.

The forms of *pañca* (“five”) are below. The stems *saptan* (“seven”), *navan* (“nine”), and *daśan* (“ten”) all follow the same pattern as *pañcan*:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	—	—	पञ्च <i>pañca</i>
Case 2	—	—	पञ्च <i>pañca</i>
Case 3	—	—	पञ्चभिः <i>pañcabhiḥ</i>
Case 4	—	—	पञ्चभ्यः <i>pañcabhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	—	—	पञ्चभ्यः <i>pañcabhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	—	—	पञ्चानाम् <i>pañcānām</i>
Case 7	—	—	पञ्चसु <i>pañcasu</i>
Case 8	—	—	पञ्च <i>pañca</i>

ṣaṣ (“six”) follows a similar pattern, but the last ṣ of ṣaṣ causes many sandhi changes:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	—	—	षट् <i>ṣaṭ</i>
Case 2	—	—	षट् <i>ṣaṭ</i>
Case 3	—	—	षड्भिः <i>ṣaḍbhiḥ</i>
Case 4	—	—	षड्भ्यः <i>ṣaḍbhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	—	—	षड्भ्यः <i>ṣaḍbhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	—	—	षण्णाम् <i>ṣaṇṇām</i>
Case 7	—	—	षट्सु <i>ṣaṭsu</i>
Case 8	—	—	षट् <i>ṣaṭ</i>

aṣṭa (“eight”) also follows a similar pattern, but it has some optional forms that are more irregular:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Case 1	—	—	अष्ट, अष्टौ <i>aṣṭa, aṣṭau</i>
Case 2	—	—	अष्ट, अष्टौ <i>aṣṭa, aṣṭau</i>
Case 3	—	—	अष्टभिः, अष्टाभिः <i>aṣṭabhiḥ, aṣṭābhiḥ</i>
Case 4	—	—	अष्टभ्यः, अष्टाभ्यः <i>aṣṭabhyaḥ, aṣṭābhyaḥ</i>
Case 5	—	—	अष्टभ्यः, अष्टाभ्यः <i>aṣṭabhyaḥ, aṣṭābhyaḥ</i>
Case 6	—	—	अष्टानाम् <i>aṣṭānām</i>
Case 7	—	—	अष्टसु, अष्टासु <i>aṣṭasu, aṣṭāsu</i>
Case 8	—	—	अष्ट, अष्टौ <i>aṣṭa, aṣṭau</i>

ekādaśa to navadaśa

You can see the numbers 11 to 19 in the examples below. All of them use the same endings as *daśa*:

एकादश

ekādaśa

eleven

द्वादश

dvādaśa

twelve

त्रयोदश

trayodaśa

thirteen

चतुर्दश

caturdaśa

fourteen

पञ्चदश

pañcadaśa

fifteen

षोडश

ṣoḍaśa

sixteen

सप्तदश

saptadaśa

seventeen

अष्टादश

aṣṭādaśa

eighteen

नवदश

navadaśa

nineteen

viṃśati to navati

All of the numbers below are used in the feminine singular:

विंशतिः

viṃśatiḥ

twenty

त्रिंशत्

triṃśat

thirty

चत्वारिंशत्

catvāriṃśat

forty

पञ्चाशत्

pañcāśat

fifty

षष्टिः

ṣaṣṭiḥ

sixty

सप्ततिः

saptatiḥ

seventy

अशीतिः

aśītiḥ

eighty

नवतिः

navatiḥ

ninety

śata to koṭi

All of these numbers are used in the singular. All of these stems are neuter, except for *koṭi*, which is feminine.

शतम्

śatam

one hundred

सहस्रम्

sahasram

one thousand

अयुतम्

ayutam

ten thousand

लक्षम्

lakṣam

one hundred thousand (i.e. one lakh)

प्रयुतम्

prayutam

one million

कोटिः

koṭiḥ

ten million (i.e. one crore)

Done

Verbs 1: Special tense-moods

Special tense-moods

In the core lessons, we learned that we can change a verb *root* into a verb *stem*. And once we have a verb stem, we can add endings to that stem to create a complete *verb*.

In the examples below, note the progression from root to stem to verb:

नी → नय → नयन्ति

nī → *naya* → *nayanti*

lead → lead → They lead.

नी → नेष्य → नेष्यामि

nī → *neṣya* → *neṣyāmi*

lead → will lead → I will lead.

We also learned that Sanskrit verbs express five basic kinds of information. These five are called **person**, which expresses the verb's perspective:

नयति ।

nayati.

(Someone) leads.

नयामि ।

nayāmi.

I lead.

number, which expresses how many of something there are:

नयति ।

nayati.

(Someone) leads.

नयन्ति ।

nayanti.

They lead.

tense-mood, which expresses the verb's **tense** (time period) and **mood** (manner):

नयति ।

nayati.

(Someone) leads.

नेष्यति ।

neṣyati.

(Someone) will lead.

नयेत् ।

nayet.

(Someone) might lead.

prayoga, which is hard to explain but easy to understand:

नयति ।

nayati.

(Someone) leads.

(*kartari prayoga*)

नीयते

nīyate

(Someone) is led.

(*karmaṇi prayoga*)

and **pada**, which is meaningful only for certain roots. We will discuss *pada* more in a later lesson, but here is a simple example of it:

नयति ।

nayati.

(Someone) leads (for another's benefit).

(*parasmaipada*)

नयते।

nayate.

(Someone) leads (for their own benefit).

(*ātmanepada*)

Four special tense-moods

Let's focus on tense-moods here. Sanskrit uses ten different tense-moods. But *four* of these tense-moods use very similar stems in *kartari prayoga*. You can see all four of these tense-moods below:

नयति

nayati

(Someone) leads.

नयतु

nayatu

(Someone) should lead.

अनयत्

anayat

(Someone) led.

नयेत्

nayet

(Someone) might or could lead.

Since these four tense-moods use a special stem, they are sometimes called **special tense-moods**. They are called “special” only because of the stem they use. Otherwise, they are like any other verb.

Ten stem patterns

We form the stems for these four special tense-moods in *ten different patterns*. Generally, each root uses just one of these ten patterns.

The most common pattern is that we strengthen the root vowel and add -a:

नी → नयति, नयतु, अनयत्, नयेत्

nī → *nayati*, *nayatu*, *anayat*, *nayet*

lead → (someone) leads, should lead, led, might lead

For other roots, we might add a suffix like *-aya* instead:

चुर् → चोरयति, चोरयतु, अचोरयत्, चोरयेत्

cur → *corayati*, *corayatu*, *acorayat*, *corayet*

steal → (someone) steals, should steal, stole, might steal

And for a few roots, we might even make a more drastic change:

हु → जुहोति, जुहोतु, अजुहोत्, जुहुयात्

hu → *juhuti*, *juhotu*, *ajuhot*, *juhuyāt*

offer → (someone) offers, should offer, offered, might offer

Since roots change in ten different ways, we can sort these roots into ten different **verb classes**. Each verb class has its own characteristic change.

In this topic, we will learn about verb classes and the four special tense-moods that use them.

Review

1. How many special tense-moods are there?
2. How many verb classes are there?

The present tense

Also known as: the present indicative, *vartamānaḥ* (“occurring”), *laṭ*

The first tense-mood we will study is the **present tense**. Traditionally, this is the first tense-mood that Sanskrit students learn.

Basic meaning

The present tense has different meanings in different contexts. Most commonly, it what is happening right now:

नयति ।

nayati.

(Someone) leads or is leading.

चरति ।

carati.

(Someone) walks or is walking.

Notice that the English translation of *nayati* is either “leads” or “is leading.” In Sanskrit, we describe both of these with the same verb form. Context makes the specific sense clear.

In general, the present tense is seen as a “default” tense. So we can also use it to describe actions that regularly occur:

अहं प्रतिदिनं पचामि ।

ahaṃ pratidinaṃ pacāmi.

I **cook** every day.

संजयः प्रतिवर्षं नगरं गच्छति ।

saṃjayaḥ prativarṣaṃ nagaraṃ gacchati.

Sanjaya **goes** to the city every year.

The present tense also expresses actions that have just finished:

त्वम् कदा ग्रामम् आगच्छसि ।

tvam kadā grāmam āgacchasi.

When **did you come** to the village?

(It is implied that the person has come very recently.)

or are just about to occur:

अहं वनम् गच्छामि ।

aham vanam gacchāmi.

I **(am just about to) go** to the forest.

In the first person, it can also have the sense of “let's”:

गच्छामः ।

gacchāmaḥ.

Let's (all) go.

राजानं पृच्छावः ।

rājānaṃ pṛcchāvaḥ.

Let's (both) ask the king.

We can modify the basic sense of the present tense with various uninflected words. One common example is that we can use *sma* to express past action:

सिंहो गुहायां निवसति स्म ।

siṃho guhāyāṃ nivasati sma.

The lion **lived (or, was living)** in the cave.

Endings

Here are the endings we use in the present tense. The examples below use the stem *naya*:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	नयति <i>nayati</i>	नयतः <i>nayataḥ</i>	नयन्ति <i>nayanti</i>
2nd	नयसि <i>nayasi</i>	नयथः <i>nayathaḥ</i>	नयथ <i>nayatha</i>
1st	नयामि <i>nayāmi</i>	नयावः <i>nayāvaḥ</i>	नयामः <i>nayāmaḥ</i>

The table above has three rows and three columns. Each row corresponds to a different person, and you can see these persons labeled on the left-hand side. Each column corresponds to a different number, and you can see these numbers labeled on the top. For example, we can use this table to learn that the “3rd person singular” form is *nayati*.

Why do we put these words in a table? It's not so that we can sit down and memorize these forms. In our view, that's a waste of time. Mainly, a table lets us see certain patterns clearly.

Here are some patterns that stand out to us:

- All of the first-person forms have a long *ā* sound in their ending.
- All of the singular forms end in *-i*.
- The sound *tha* is used only in the second person.

Review

The present tense is simple and straightforward. In the next lesson, we will learn about the command mood, which uses similar endings to the present tense.

The command mood

Also known as: the imperative mood, *ājñā* (“command”), *loṭ*

The present tense and the **command mood** use similar endings. So, let's learn about the command mood next.

Basic meaning

The command mood is used for commands. We commonly see the command mood in the second person:

नय

naya

Lead!

नयत

nayata

(You all) lead!

But in other persons, the command mood has many more subtle meanings. In the third person, it can have the sense of a suggestion, a demand, or a request:

रामो वनं गच्छतु।

rāmo vanam gacchatu.

Rama **could go** to the forest. (suggestion)

Send Rama to the forest. (demand or request)

The command mood is rarely used in the first person. When it is used, it usually has the sense of fulfilling another's need:

किं करवाणि ते?

kiṃ karavāṇi te?

What **may I do** for you?

Endings

Here are the endings of the command mood as used with the stem *naya*:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	नयतु <i>nayatu</i>	नयताम् <i>nayatām</i>	नयन्तु <i>nayantu</i>
2nd	नय <i>naya</i>	नयतम् <i>nayatam</i>	नयत <i>nayata</i>
1st	नयानि <i>nayāni</i>	नयाव <i>nayāva</i>	नयाम <i>nayāma</i>

Let's take a moment to compare these endings to the ones used in the present tense. Notice that the first-person endings still use a long *ā*. There are other similarities as well: *nayati* is replaced by *nayatu*, and *nayanti* by *nayantu*.

But there are also some major differences. In particular, notice these five endings:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd		ताम् <i>tām</i>	
2nd		तम् <i>tam</i>	त <i>ta</i>
1st		व <i>va</i>	म <i>ma</i>

These five endings will repeat in the next two tense-moods.

The ordinary past tense

Also known as: the imperfect, *anadyatana-bhūta* (“past action not of today”), *lañ*

Basic meaning

The **ordinary past tense** technically refers to past actions that occurred before today. But in practice, it refers to any past action:

रामो लङ्काम् अगच्छत् ।

rāmo laṅkāṃ agacchat.

Rama went to Lanka.

रामः सीताम् अपश्यत् ।

rāmaḥ sītām apaśyat.

Rama saw Sita.

Note the *a-* at the beginning of each verb:

गच्छति → अगच्छत्

gacchati → *agacchat*

goes → went

Many of the tense-moods that describe past events will add this *a-* sound to the beginning of the stem.

Endings

Here are the endings of the ordinary past tense as used with the stem *naya*:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	अनयत् <i>anayat</i>	अनयताम् <i>anayatām</i>	अनयन् <i>anayan</i>
2nd	अनयः <i>anayaḥ</i>	अनयतम् <i>anayatam</i>	अनयत <i>anayata</i>
1st	अनयम् <i>anayam</i>	अनयाव <i>anayāva</i>	अनयाम <i>anayāma</i>

Notice that many of these endings are shortened versions of the present tense endings. Endings that end with *-i* lose that *-i*:

नयति → अनयत्
nayati → *anayat*

नयसि → अनयः
nayasi → *anayaḥ*

नयामि → अनयम्
nayāmi → *anayam*

नयन्ति → अनयन्
nayanti → *anayan*

And endings that end with the *visarga* lose that *visarga*:

नयावः → अनयाव
nayāvaḥ → *anayāva*

नयामः → अनयाम
nayāmaḥ → *anayāma*

Using verb prefixes

If the verb uses a verb prefix, we add that prefix *before* the *a-*:

परिगच्छति → पर्यगच्छत्

parigacchati → *paryagacchat*

goes around → went around

Why does this happen? In early Sanskrit, verb prefixes were ordinary uninflected words that could occur anywhere in the sentence. Here is a simple example:

परि ग्रामम् अगच्छत्।

pari grāmam agacchat.

He went around the village.

In later Sanskrit, however, these words are almost always placed just before the verb. And over time, they were treated as a single word:

परि अगच्छत् → पर्यगच्छत्।

pari agacchat → *paryagacchat.*

The potential mood

Also known as: the optative, *vidhiḥ* (“injunction”), *vidhiliṅ*

The **potential mood** is the last of the four special tense-moods.

Basic meaning

The potential mood usually describes what might, could, or should happen:

रामः वनम् गच्छेत् ।

rāmaḥ vanam gacchet.

Rama **might go** to the forest.

The potential mood can express many different meanings based on the context. For example, it can show what someone is capable of doing:

अहम् इदं वनं सर्वं दहेयम् ।

aḥam idaṁ vanaṁ sarvaṁ daheyam.

I **could burn** all of this forest.

It can be a soft command:

त्वम् इदं खादेः ।

tvam idaṁ khādeḥ.

You **should eat** this.

And there are other subtle uses as well.

Endings

The endings we use with the potential mood are almost identical to the endings of the ordinary past tense. There are two main differences. The first difference is that we add an extra *-ī* sound before every ending:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	ईत् <i>īt</i>	ईताम् <i>ītām</i>	ईयुः <i>īyuh</i>
2nd	ईः <i>īḥ</i>	ईतम् <i>ītam</i>	ईत <i>īta</i>
1st	ईयम् <i>īyam</i>	ईव <i>īva</i>	ईम <i>īma</i>

And the second is that the third-person plural ending is *-uh* instead of *-an*:

अनयन् ।

anayan.

They led.

नयेयुः ।

nayeyuh.

They might lead.

Here is how these endings appear when used with a stem like *naya*:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	नयेत् <i>nayet</i>	नयेताम् <i>nayetām</i>	नयेयुः <i>nayeyuh</i>
2nd	नयेः <i>nayeh</i>	नयेतम् <i>nayetam</i>	नयेत <i>nayeta</i>
1st	नयेयम् <i>nayeyam</i>	नयेव <i>nayeva</i>	नयेम <i>nayema</i>

Note the sandhi between the stem and the ending here:

नय + ईत् → नयेत्

naya + īt → nayet

(someone) might, could, or should lead

ātmanepada

Also known as: the middle voice

In the previous lesson, we focused on the *parasmaipada* endings used by the four special tense-moods. In this lesson, we will focus on the *ātmanepada* endings.

What is ātmanepada?

Sanskrit has two different sets of verb endings: *parasmaipada* endings and *ātmanepada* endings. Some roots always use *parasmaipada* endings, some roots always use *ātmanepada* endings, and some roots can use both.

For a small number of roots, *ātmanepada* endings imply that the person performing the action is doing so for their own benefit. Here is the classic example:

देवदत्त ओदनं पचति ।

devadatta odanam pacati.

Devadatta cooks rice (for others).

देवदत्त ओदनं पचते ।

devadatta odanam pacate.

Devadatta cooks rice (for himself).

In older Sanskrit, this distinction is more meaningful. But in later Sanskrit, there is little to no difference in meaning between these two sets of endings.

The present tense

Here are the *ātmanepada* endings of the present tense:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	नयते <i>nayate</i>	नयेते <i>nayete</i>	नयन्ते <i>nayante</i>
2nd	नयसे <i>nayase</i>	नयेथे <i>nayethe</i>	नयध्वे <i>nayadhve</i>
1st	नये <i>naye</i>	नयावहे <i>nayāvahe</i>	नयामहे <i>nayāmahe</i>

First, notice that all of these endings end in *-e* in the present tense. Also, notice that many of these endings are similar to their *parasmaipada* counterparts. Here are the similar forms:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	नयति <i>nayati</i>	नयतः <i>nayataḥ</i>	नयन्ति <i>nayanti</i>
2nd	नयसि <i>nayasi</i>	नयथः <i>nayathaḥ</i>	
1st		नयावः <i>nayāvaḥ</i>	नयामः <i>nayāmaḥ</i>

The command mood

Here are the endings for the command mood:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	नयताम् <i>nayatām</i>	नयेताम् <i>nayetām</i>	नयन्ताम् <i>nayantām</i>
2nd	नयस्व <i>nayasva</i>	नयेथाम् <i>nayethām</i>	नयध्वम् <i>nayadhvam</i>
1st	नयै <i>nayai</i>	नयावहै <i>nayāvahai</i>	नयामहै <i>nayāmahai</i>

As before, focus on these five endings, which the next two tense-moods will mostly reuse:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd		ताम् <i>tām</i>	
2nd		थाम् <i>thām</i>	ध्वम् <i>dhvam</i>
1st		वहै <i>vahai</i>	महै <i>mahai</i>

The ordinary past tense

As before, the forms of the ordinary past tense have an *a-* prefix:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	अनयत <i>anayata</i>	अनयेताम् <i>anayetām</i>	अनयन्त <i>anayanta</i>
2nd	अनयथाः <i>anayathāḥ</i>	अनयेथाम् <i>anayethām</i>	अनयध्वम् <i>anayadhvam</i>
1st	अनये <i>anaye</i>	अनयावहि <i>anayāvahi</i>	अनयामहि <i>anayāmahi</i>

The first person uses the endings *-vahi* and *-mahi* instead of the *-vahai* and *-mahai* used above.

The potential mood

As before, the potential mood uses nearly the same endings as the ordinary past tense. And as before, all of these endings start with *-ī*:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	नयेत <i>nayeta</i>	नयेयाताम् <i>nayeyātām</i>	नयेरन् <i>nayeran</i>
2nd	नयेः <i>nayeh</i>	नयेयाथम् <i>nayeyātham</i>	नयेध्वम् <i>nayedhvam</i>
1st	नयेय <i>nayeya</i>	नयेवहि <i>nayevahi</i>	नयेमहि <i>nayemahi</i>

As before, the one exception is the third-person plural ending:

अनयन्त ।

anayanta.

They led.

नयेरन्।

nayeran.

They might lead.

Review

1. In later Sanskrit, is there a strong difference in meaning between *parasmaipada* and *ātmanepada* endings?

The *bhū*, *div*, *tud*, and *cur* classes

We have learned that there are four special tense-moods and that we create stems for these special tense-moods in ten different patterns. We can sort all verb roots into ten different lists based on which pattern they use. These lists are called **verb classes**.

Four of these verb classes are quite simple to create and use:

भू → भव

bhū → *bhava*

be, become → (someone) is or becomes

दिक् → दीव्य

div → *dīvyā*

gamble → (someone) gambles

तुद् → तुद

tud → *tuda*

strike (someone) strikes

चुर् → चोरय

cur → *coraya*

steal (someone) steals

Let's call these four classes the **simple verb classes**. Each class is named after the first root in its list.

The *bhū* class

The *bhū* class is the largest of the ten verb classes and contains almost half of all verb roots. Here are some examples of this class:

भू → भवति

bhū → *bhavati*

be, become → (someone) is or becomes

नी → नयति

nī → *nayati*

lead → (someone) leads

शुच् → शोचति

śuc → *śocati*

grieve → (someone) grieves

निन्द् → निन्दति

nind → *nindati*

deride → (someone) derides

जीव् → जीवति

jīv → *jīvati*

live → (someone) lives

For most roots in this class, we create a stem by *strengthening* the root vowel and adding the suffix *-a*. Here are some examples:

भू → भो + अ → भव

bhū → *bho* + *a* → *bhava*

become

नी → ने + अ → नय

nī → *ne* + *a* → *naya*

lead

शुच् → शोच् + अ → शोच

śuc → *śoc* + *a* → *śoca*

grieve

However, there are some roots that don't use a strengthened vowel. For example, roots whose vowel is *a* don't change:

हस् → हस

has → *hasa*

laugh

And if a root's syllable would be heavy even after we add *-a*, then we don't strengthen the root. Or to put it another way, there is no change if the root ends in multiple consonants:

निन्द् → निन्द
nind → *ninda*
 blame

Or if the root has a long vowel followed by a consonant:

जीव् → जीव
jīv → *jīva*
 live

There are also several roots that form their stems in an unpredictable way. Such stems are called **irregular** stems. Here are some common examples of irregular stems:

Root	Verb	Basic meaning
स्था <i>sthā</i>	तिष्ठति <i>tiṣṭhati</i>	stand
पा <i>pā</i>	पिबति <i>pibati</i>	drink
दृश् <i>drś</i>	पश्यति <i>paśyati</i>	see
गम् <i>gam</i>	गच्छति <i>gacchati</i>	go

The roots that use irregular stems are all common, and you will see and hear them many times as you engage with real Sanskrit content. So although you might be tempted to memorize these forms, you will acquire them naturally as you continue to read and listen to Sanskrit.

Why is the root *drś*?

The ancient grammarians decided on verb roots by analyzing all of a verb's tense-moods and derived forms. Words like *paśyati*, *paśyet*, *pasyatu*, and *apaśyat* strongly suggest a root like *paś*. But we must also consider words like *drakṣyati* (“will see”), *dadarśa* (“saw long ago”), *adrākṣīt* (“saw”), *drśyate* (“is seen”), and so on.

Given a choice between *drś* and *paś*, the grammarians chose *drś* to represent these verbs. The specific reasons are complicated to explain right now. But the simple reason is *drś* makes it easier to talk about certain general patterns in Sanskrit.

This same logic explains some of the other irregular roots above.

The *div* class

For roots in the ***div* class**, we form a stem by adding *-ya* to the root. No vowel strengthening occurs:

मुह् → मुह्य
muh → *muhya*
 become confused

This class has a few irregular stems. Usually, these irregular stems lengthen the root's vowel. Here are a few examples:

Root	Verb	Basic meaning
दिक् <i>div</i>	दीव्यति <i>dīvyati</i>	gamble
जन् <i>jan</i>	जायते <i>jāyate</i>	be born
शम् <i>śam</i>	शाम्यति <i>śāmyati</i>	be tired or calm
मद् <i>mad</i>	माद्यति <i>mādyati</i>	be intoxicated

The *tud* class

For roots in the ***tud* class**, we form a stem by adding *-a* to the root. No vowel strengthening occurs:

तुद् → तुद
tud → *tuda*
 strike

The irregular stems in this class usually have an extra nasal sound:

Root	Stem	Basic meaning
मुच् <i>muc</i>	मुञ्च <i>muñca</i>	release
कृत् <i>kṛt</i>	कृन्तति <i>kṛntati</i>	cut
लिप् <i>lip</i>	लिम्पति <i>limpati</i>	anoint or smear
सिच् <i>sic</i>	सिञ्चति <i>siñcati</i>	sprinkle

Why isn't *nind* in the *tud* class?

If *nind* doesn't strengthen its vowel, why isn't it in the *tud* class? This is a great question. The answer ultimately has to do with different *vowel accents* in Sanskrit.

Old Sanskrit has a feature called *pitch accent*, where some vowels are spoken with a higher pitch than others. This pitch accent can still be heard in Vedic recitation.

The roots in the *tud* class generally have a high accent on their *-a* suffix, and the roots in the *bhū* class have a low accent. *nind* uses a low accent for this *-a* sound, so it is in the *bhū* class.

The *cur* class

For most roots in the ***cur* class**, we create the stem by *strengthening* the root vowel and adding the suffix *-aya*. Here are some examples:

चुर् → चोरय

cur → *coraya*

steal → (someone) steals

चिन्त् → चिन्तयति

cint → *cintayati*

think → (someone) thinks

Notice that the stem of *cint* is *cintayati*, not **centayati*. (We use the *** symbol to show that this word is not correct Sanskrit.) Since *cint* ends in multiple consonants, its vowel does not strengthen. So it behaves in the same way as *nindati* above.

The irregular stems in the *cur* class usually have extra sounds between the roots and the *-aya* suffix:

Root	Stem	Basic meaning
प्री <i>prī</i>	प्रीणयति <i>prīṇayati</i>	please
धू <i>dhū</i>	धूनयति <i>dhūnayati</i>	shake

Review

1. How do we usually make stems in the *bhū* class?
2. How do we usually make stems in the *div* class?
3. How do we usually make stems in the *tud* class?
4. How do we usually make stems in the *cur* class?

The *su*, *tan*, and *krī* classes

In the previous lesson, we learned about the four *simple verb classes*:

Root	Stem
भू <i>bhū</i>	भव <i>bhava</i>
दिक् <i>div</i>	दीव्य <i>dīvyā</i>
तुद् <i>tud</i>	तुद् <i>tud</i>
चुर् <i>cur</i>	चोरय <i>coraya</i>

The other six verb classes are more complex. Let's call these six classes the **complex verb classes** for short.

In this lesson, we will study three of these classes: the *su* class, the *tan* class, and the *krī* class. First, we will learn how these classes form their stems. Then, we will learn how to use these stems with the endings of the four special tense-moods.

What makes a verb class complex?

Why are these classes called the *complex* verb class? First, their stems end in sounds other than *-a*. As a result, we might have to apply various sandhi changes to these stems and endings:

द्वेष् + ति → द्वेष्टि

dveṣ + ti → dveṣṭi

hate → (someone) hates

Second, their stems come in two different versions: a **strong** stem that is used with certain endings, and a **weak** ending that is used with the other endings:

द्वेष् + ति → द्वेष्टि

dveṣ + *ti* → *dveṣṭi*

hate → (someone) hates

(strong stem)

द्विष् + अन्ति → द्विषन्ति

dviṣ + *anti* → *dviṣanti*

hate → (someone) hates

(weak stem)

Third, some of these classes use endings that differ from the endings we have seen already:

कृ → कुर्वते

kr̥ → *kurvate*

They all make.

(Note that this is not **kurvante*, as we might otherwise expect)

The *su* class

The ***su* class** uses two different stems. Its strong stem uses the suffix *-no*, and its weak stem uses the suffix *-nu*:

सु → सुनोति

su → *sunoti*

(Someone) presses out.

सु → सुन्वन्ति

su → *sunvanti*

They press out.

One of its important irregular verbs is *śru* (“hear”). Its strong stem is *śṛṇo*, and its weak stem is *śṛṇu*:

श्रु → शृणोति

śru → *śṛṇoti*

(Someone) hears.

श्रु → शृण्वन्ति

śru → *śṛṇvanti*

They hear.

The *tan* class

The ***tan* class** is just like the *su* class. But instead of using *-no* and *-nu*, it uses *-o* and *-u*:

तन् → तनोति

tan → *tanoti*

expand → (someone) expands

तन् → तन्वन्ति

tan → *tanvanti*

expand → they expand

The *tan* class contains only ten roots. But it also contains the root *kṛ* (“do, make”), which is one of the most common roots in all of Sanskrit. The strong stem of *kṛ* is *karo-*, and the weak stem is *kuru-*:

कृ → करोति

kṛ → *karoti*

do → (someone) does

कृ → कुर्वन्ति

kṛ → *kurvanti*

do → they do

The *krī* class

The ***krī* class** uses *-nā* for its strong stem and *-nī* for its weak stem:

क्री → क्रीणाति

krī → *krīṇāti*

buy → (someone) buys

क्री → क्रीणीतः

krī → *krīṇītaḥ*

buy → the two of them buy

krī + *nā* becomes *krīṇā* due to a sandhi rule. The idea is that *r* might cause the *n* sounds that follow it to become *ṇ*.

Complex classes with *parasmaipada* endings

The complex classes use the same *parasmaipada* endings as the simple classes. In the tables below, the red words use a strong stem.

First, we have the present tense:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	सुनोति <i>sunoti</i>	सुनुतः <i>sunutaḥ</i>	सुन्वन्ति <i>sunvanti</i>
2nd	सुनोषि <i>sunoṣi</i>	सुनुथः <i>sunuthaḥ</i>	सुनुथ <i>sunutha</i>
1st	सुनोमि <i>sunomi</i>	सुनुवः <i>sunuvaḥ</i>	सुनुमः <i>sunumaḥ</i>

Notice the sandhi change in the second-person singular (*sunosi* becomes *sunoṣi*).

Next, we have the command mood:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	सुनोतु <i>sunotu</i>	सुनुताम् <i>sunutām</i>	सुन्वन्तु <i>sunvantu</i>
2nd	सुनु <i>sunu</i>	सुनुतम् <i>sunutam</i>	सुनुत <i>sunuta</i>
1st	सुनवानि <i>sunavāni</i>	सुनवाव <i>sunavāva</i>	सुनवाम <i>sunavāma</i>

Then the ordinary past tense:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	असुनोत् <i>asunot</i>	असुनुताम् <i>asunutām</i>	असुन्वन् <i>asunvan</i>
2nd	असुनोः <i>asunoḥ</i>	असुनुतम् <i>asunutam</i>	असुनुत <i>asunuta</i>
1st	असुनवम् <i>asunavam</i>	असुनुव <i>asunuva</i>	असुनुम <i>asunuma</i>

And the potential mood:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	सुनुयात् <i>sunuyāt</i>	सुनुयाताम् <i>sunuyātām</i>	सुनुयुः <i>sunuyuh</i>
2nd	सुनुयाः <i>sunuyāḥ</i>	सुनुयातम् <i>sunuyātam</i>	सुनुयात <i>sunuyāta</i>
1st	सुनुयाम् <i>sunuyām</i>	सुनुयाव <i>sunuyāva</i>	सुनुयाम <i>sunuyāma</i>

Notice that the ending uses -yā- instead of -ī-. But the 3rd person plural ending is just -yuh.

Complex classes with *ātmanepada* endings

The complex classes generally use the same *ātmanepada* endings as the simple classes. The major difference is the third-person plural. Although we use *-ante* and *-anta* in the simple classes, we use *-ate* and *-ata* here:

लभन्ते

labhante

They obtain.

सुन्वते

sunvate

They press out.

अलभन्त

alabhanta

They obtained.

असुन्वत

asunvata

They pressed out.

First, we have the present tense:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	सुनुते <i>sunute</i>	सुन्वाते <i>sunvāte</i>	सुन्वते <i>sunvate</i>
2nd	सुनुषे <i>sunuṣe</i>	सुन्वाथे <i>sunvāthe</i>	सुनुध्वे <i>sunudhve</i>
1st	सुन्वे <i>sunve</i>	सुनुवहे <i>sunuvahe</i>	सुनुमहे <i>sunumahe</i>

For the first person, we also have the optional forms *sunvahe* and *sunmahe*.

Next is the command mood:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	सुनुताम् <i>sunutām</i>	सुन्वाताम् <i>sunvātām</i>	सुन्वताम् <i>sunvatām</i>
2nd	सुनुष्व <i>sunuṣva</i>	सुन्वाथाम् <i>sunvāthām</i>	सुनुध्वम् <i>sunudhvam</i>
1st	सुनवै <i>sunavai</i>	सुनवावहै <i>sunavāvahai</i>	सुनवामहै <i>sunavāmahai</i>

Then the ordinary past tense:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	असुनुत <i>asunuta</i>	असुन्वाताम् <i>asunvātām</i>	असुन्वत <i>asunvata</i>
2nd	असुनुथाः <i>asunuthāḥ</i>	असुन्वाथाम् <i>asunvāthām</i>	असुनुध्वम् <i>asunudhvam</i>
1st	असुन्वि <i>asunvi</i>	असुनुवहि <i>asunuvahi</i>	असुनुमहि <i>asunumahi</i>

Here, too, we have the optional forms *asunvahi* and *asunmahi* in the first person.

Finally, we have the potential mood:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	सुन्वीत <i>sunvīta</i>	सुन्वीयाताम् <i>sunvīyātām</i>	सुन्वीरन् <i>sunvīran</i>
2nd	सुन्वीथाः <i>sunvīthāḥ</i>	सुन्वीयाथाम् <i>sunvīyāthām</i>	सुन्वीध्वम् <i>sunvīdhvam</i>
1st	सुन्वीय <i>sunvīya</i>	सुन्वीवहि <i>sunvīvahi</i>	सुन्वीमहि <i>sunvīmahi</i>

Notice that most of these endings start with *-ī-*.

Endings for the *tan* and *krī* classes

The *tan* class is essentially identical to the *su* class, including its optional forms.

The *krī* class also uses the same endings. But the last *-ī* of its weak stem uses a special sandhi rule: if the verb ending starts with *a*, then the *-ī* is removed:

क्रीणी + अन्ति → क्रीणन्ति

krīṇī + anti → krīṇanti

क्रीणी + अन्तु → क्रीणन्तु

krīṇī + antu → krīṇantu

अक्रीणी + अन् → अक्रीणन्

akrīṇī + an → akrīṇan

क्रीणी + अते → क्रीणते

krīṇī + ate → krīṇate

अक्रीणी + अत → अक्रीणत

akrīṇī + ata → akrīṇata

Also, the second-person singular of the command mood uses the ending *-hi*:

एतत् क्रीणीहि ।

etat krīṇīhi.

Buy this.

Review

1. What are the strong and weak stems of *su*?
2. What are the strong and weak stems of *śru*?
3. What are the strong and weak stems of *tan*?
4. What are the strong and weak stems of *kṛ*?
5. What are the strong and weak stems of *krī*?

The *ad* and *rudh* classes

In the previous lesson, we learned about three of the six complex verb classes:

Root	Strong stem	Weak stem
सु <i>su</i>	सुनो <i>suno</i>	सुनु <i>sunu</i>
तन् <i>tan</i>	तनो <i>tano</i>	तनु <i>tanu</i>
क्री <i>krī</i>	क्रीणा <i>krīṇā</i>	क्रीणी <i>krīṇī</i>

In this lesson, we will learn about two more complex verb classes. Both of these classes can create stems that end with consonant sounds. And since many verb endings *start* with consonants, these classes might cause various sandhi changes:

द्वेष् + ति → द्वेष्टि
dveṣ + ti → dveṣṭi
 (someone) hates

The *ad* class

Also known as: class 2, *adādigāṇa* (“the group starting with *ad*”)

The ***ad* class** does not use a suffix. Instead, its strong stem is the root with a strengthened vowel, and its weak stem is the root itself.

The root *ad* has *ad* for its strong stem and the same *ad* for its weak stem. So, *ad* does not demonstrate these changes well. Instead, let's use the root *dviṣ* (“hate”), which has a clearer difference between its strong and weak stems:

द्वेष्टि।
dveṣṭi.
 (Someone) hates.

द्विषन्ति ।

dviṣanti.

They hate.

For the word *dveṣṭi*, notice that the root ends with a consonant (ṣ) and the ending begins with a consonant (t). By a sandhi change, a *t* after *ṣ* becomes *ṭ*, so we get the result *dveṣṭi*.

The *ad* class has many irregular roots. The most important irregular root of the *ad* class is *as*, which means “be” or “exist.” Its strong stem is *as*, and its weak stem is *s*:

वनम् अस्ति ।

vanam asti.

There is a forest.

वानरा वने सन्ति ।

vānarā vane santi.

Monkeys are in the forest.

The *rudh* class

Also known as: class 7, *rudhādigaṇa* (“the group starting with *rudh*”)

Like the *ad* class, the ***rudh* class** also doesn't use a suffix. Instead, we create the strong and weak stems by inserting a nasal sound after the root's last vowel. For the strong stem, we insert *na*. For the weak stem, we insert *n*:

रुध् → रुणद्धि

rudh → *ruṇaddhi*

(Someone) obstructs.

रुध् → रुन्धन्ति

rudh → *rundhanti*

They obstruct.

Again, notice the sandhi change:

रुणध् + ति → रुणद्धि
ruṇadh + ti → ruṇaddhi

And as a reminder, *r* generally causes nearby *n* sounds to become *ṇ*. Hence we have *ruṇaddhi* and not **runaddhi*. (We use the *** symbol to show that this word is not correct Sanskrit.)

Endings of the *ad* class

With one or two exceptions, the *ad* class uses the same endings as the *krī* class. But since the *ad* class may cause many sandhi changes, these endings may not always be clear. We want to show you what these changes are like, so we will show you all of the forms of *dviṣ* in the special tense-moods.

First, here are the *parasmaipada* forms of *dviṣ* in the present tense:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	द्वेष्टि <i>dveṣṭi</i>	द्विष्टः <i>dviṣṭaḥ</i>	द्विषन्ति <i>dviṣanti</i>
2nd	द्वेक्षि <i>dvekṣi</i>	द्विष्ठः <i>dviṣṭhaḥ</i>	द्विष्ठ <i>dviṣṭha</i>
1st	द्वेष्मि <i>dveṣmi</i>	द्विष्वः <i>dviṣvaḥ</i>	द्विष्मः <i>dviṣmaḥ</i>

Next, here is the command mood:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	द्वेष्टु <i>dveṣṭu</i>	द्विष्टाम् <i>dviṣṭām</i>	द्विषन्तु <i>dviṣantu</i>
2nd	द्विद्धि <i>dviḍḍhi</i>	द्विष्टम् <i>dviṣṭam</i>	द्विष्ट <i>dviṣṭa</i>
1st	द्वेषाणि <i>dveṣāṇi</i>	द्वेषाव <i>dveṣāva</i>	द्वेषाम <i>dveṣāma</i>

In the second-person singular, we use *dhi* instead of *hi* if the root ends in a consonant. Then *dviṣ* + *dhi* becomes *dviḍḍhi* due to sandhi.

Next, we have the ordinary past tense:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	अद्वेष्ट् <i>advēṣṭ</i>	अद्विष्टाम् <i>advīṣṭām</i>	अद्विषन् <i>advīṣan</i>
2nd	अद्वेष्ट् <i>advēṣṭ</i>	अद्विष्टम् <i>advīṣṭam</i>	अद्विष्ट <i>advīṣṭa</i>
1st	अद्वेषम् <i>advēṣam</i>	अद्विष्व <i>advīṣva</i>	अद्विष्म <i>advīṣma</i>

Why do we use *advēṣṭ*? This is due to a complex rule of consonant sandhi. Read our lessons on consonant sandhi to learn more.

If the root ends in *-ā*, we can also use the ending *-uḥ* instead of *-an*:

या → अयान्, अयुः

yā → *ayān*, *ayuh*

They went.

Finally, we have the the potential mood:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	द्विष्यात् <i>dviṣyāt</i>	द्विष्याताम् <i>dviṣyātām</i>	द्विष्युः <i>dviṣyuh</i>
2nd	द्विष्याः <i>dviṣyāḥ</i>	द्विष्यातम् <i>dviṣyātam</i>	द्विष्यात <i>dviṣyāta</i>
1st	द्विष्याम् <i>dviṣyām</i>	द्विष्याव <i>dviṣyāva</i>	द्विष्याम <i>dviṣyāma</i>

Now, here are the *ātmanepada* forms of *dviṣ* in the present tense:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	द्विष्टे <i>dviṣṭe</i>	द्विषाते <i>dviṣāte</i>	द्विषते <i>dviṣate</i>
2nd	द्विक्षे <i>dviṣṭe</i>	द्विषाथे <i>dviṣāthe</i>	द्विद्ध्वे <i>dviḍdhve</i>
1st	द्विषे <i>dviṣe</i>	द्विष्वहे <i>dviṣvahe</i>	द्विष्महे <i>dviṣmahe</i>

the command mood:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	द्विष्टाम् <i>dviṣṭām</i>	द्विषाताम् <i>dviṣātām</i>	द्विषताम् <i>dviṣatām</i>
2nd	द्विक्ष्व <i>dviḥṣva</i>	द्विषाथाम् <i>dviṣāthām</i>	द्विद्धम् <i>dviḍḍhvam</i>
1st	द्वेषै <i>dveṣai</i>	द्वेषावहै <i>dveṣāvahai</i>	द्वेषामहै <i>dveṣāmahai</i>

the ordinary past tense:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	अद्विष्ट <i>adviṣṭa</i>	अद्विषाताम् <i>adviṣātām</i>	अद्विषत <i>adviṣata</i>
2nd	अद्विष्ठाः <i>adviṣṭhāḥ</i>	अद्विषाथाम् <i>adviṣāthām</i>	अद्विद्धम् <i>adviḍḍhvam</i>
1st	अद्विषि <i>adviṣi</i>	अद्विष्वहि <i>adviṣvahi</i>	अद्विष्महि <i>adviṣmahi</i>

and the potential mood:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	द्विषीत <i>dviṣīta</i>	द्विषीयाताम् <i>dviṣīyātām</i>	द्विषीरन् <i>dviṣīran</i>
2nd	द्विषीथाः <i>dviṣīthāḥ</i>	द्विषीयाथाम् <i>dviṣīyāthām</i>	द्विषीद्वम् <i>dviṣīḍhvam</i>
1st	द्विषीय <i>dviṣīya</i>	द्विषीवहि <i>dviṣīvahi</i>	द्विषीमहि <i>dviṣīmahi</i>

Endings of the *rudh* class

The *rudh* class uses the same endings as the *krī* class. But as before, the *rudh* class may cause many different sandhi changes.

Here are the *parasmaipada* forms of *rudh* in the present tense:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	रुणद्धि <i>ruṇaddhi</i>	रुन्दः <i>ruṇddhaḥ</i>	रुन्धन्ति <i>ruṇdhanti</i>
2nd	रुणत्सि <i>ruṇatsi</i>	रुन्दः <i>ruṇddhaḥ</i>	रुन्द <i>ruṇddha</i>
1st	रुणध्मि <i>ruṇadhmi</i>	रुन्ध्वः <i>ruṇdhvaḥ</i>	रुन्ध्वः <i>ruṇdhmaḥ</i>

and the command mood:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	रुणद्धु <i>ruṇaddhu</i>	रुन्द्धाम् <i>ruṇddhām</i>	रुन्धन्तु <i>ruṇdhantu</i>
2nd	रुन्द्धि <i>ruṇddhi</i>	रुन्द्धम् <i>ruṇddham</i>	रुन्द्ध <i>ruṇddha</i>
1st	रुणधानि <i>ruṇadhāni</i>	रुणधाव <i>ruṇadhāva</i>	रुणधाम <i>ruṇadhāma</i>

Next are the forms of the ordinary past tense:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	अरुणत् <i>aruṇat</i>	अरुन्द्धाम् <i>aruṇddhām</i>	अरुन्धन् <i>aruṇdhan</i>
2nd	अरुणत् <i>aruṇat</i>	अरुन्द्धम् <i>aruṇddham</i>	अरुन्द्ध <i>aruṇddha</i>
1st	अरुणधम् <i>aruṇadham</i>	अरुन्ध्व <i>aruṇdhva</i>	अरुन्ध्म <i>aruṇdhma</i>

Why do we use *aruṇat*? Again, this is due to a complex rule of consonant sandhi. Read our lessons on consonant sandhi to learn more.

Finally, we have the potential mood:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	रुन्ध्यात् <i>rundhyāt</i>	रुन्ध्याताम् <i>rundhyātām</i>	रुन्ध्युः <i>rundhyuḥ</i>
2nd	रुन्ध्याः <i>rundhyāḥ</i>	रुन्ध्यातम् <i>rundhyātām</i>	रुन्ध्यात <i>rundhyāta</i>
1st	रुन्ध्याम् <i>rundhyām</i>	रुन्ध्याव <i>rundhyāva</i>	रुन्ध्याम <i>rundhyāma</i>

Next, we have the *ātmanepada* forms of *rudh* in the present tense:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	रुन्ध्वे <i>runddhe</i>	रुन्धाते <i>rundhāte</i>	रुन्धते <i>rundhate</i>
2nd	रुन्त्से <i>runtse</i>	रुन्धाथे <i>rundhāthe</i>	रुन्ध्वे <i>runddhve</i>
1st	रुन्धे <i>rundhe</i>	रुन्ध्वहे <i>rundhvahe</i>	रुन्ध्वहे <i>rundhmahe</i>

the command mood:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	रुन्धाम् <i>runddhām</i>	रुन्धाताम् <i>rundhātām</i>	रुन्धताम् <i>rundhatām</i>
2nd	रुन्त्स्व <i>runtsva</i>	रुन्धाथाम् <i>rundhāthām</i>	रुन्ध्वम् <i>runddhvam</i>
1st	रुणधै <i>ruṇadhai</i>	रुणधावहै <i>ruṇadhāvahai</i>	रुणधामहै <i>ruṇadhāmahai</i>

the ordinary past tense:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	अरुन्ध <i>arunddha</i>	अरुन्धाताम् <i>arundhātām</i>	अरुन्धत <i>arundhata</i>
2nd	अरुन्धः <i>arunddhāḥ</i>	अरुन्धाथाम् <i>arundhāthām</i>	अरुन्ध्वम् <i>arunddhvam</i>
1st	अरुन्धि <i>arundhi</i>	अरुन्ध्वहि <i>arundhvahi</i>	अरुन्धमहि <i>arundhmahi</i>

and the potential mood:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	रुन्धीत <i>rundhīta</i>	रुन्धीयाताम् <i>rundhīyātām</i>	रुन्धीरन् <i>rundhīran</i>
2nd	रुन्धीथाः <i>rundhīthāḥ</i>	रुन्धीयाथाम् <i>rundhīyāthām</i>	रुन्धीध्वम् <i>rundhīdhvam</i>
1st	रुन्धीय <i>rundhīya</i>	रुन्धीवहि <i>rundhīvahi</i>	रुन्धीमहि <i>rundhīmahi</i>

Review

The *ad* and *rudh* classes cause many different sandhi changes. But we can learn these forms through exposure over time, and we can understand their meanings from context.

1. What are the strong and weak stems of *dviṣ*?
2. What are the strong and weak stems of *rudh*?
3. What is the most important root of the *ad* class?

The *hu* class

Also known as: class 3, *juhotyādigāṇa* (“the group starting with *juhoti*”)

The last class we will consider is the ***hu* class**. The *hu* class forms its stems in a unique way. It does not use a special suffix, and we do not insert any new sounds. Instead, we **double** the root in a special way:

हु → जुहु

hu → *juhu*

offer

Then the strong stem uses a strengthened vowel and the weak stem has no extra change:

जुहोति ।

juhoti.

(Someone) offers.

जुहुतः ।

juhutaḥ.

(The two of them) offer.

The *hu* class is rare, but doubling is not. Many different kinds of Sanskrit verbs use doubling, and we will see more examples of it in other lessons.

Basic rules of doubling

Long vowels become short:

दा दा → ददा

dā dā → *dadā*

Aspirated sounds become unaspirated:

धा धा → दधा

dhā dhā → *dadhā*

Sounds pronounced at the soft palate (*ka*) shift to the hard palate (*ca*):

कि कि → चिकि

ki ki → ciki

हु हु → जुहु

hu hu → juhu

There are other minor rules, but these are the common patterns.

Irregular roots

The *hu* class has many irregular roots. The most important are *dā* (“give”) and *dhā* (“place”). *dā* uses the strong stem *dadā* and uses weak stem *dad*:

रामः फलं सीतायै ददाति ।

rāmaḥ phalaṁ sītāyai dadāti.

Rama gives the fruit to Sita.

ते फलानि रामाय ददति ।

te phalāni rāmāya dadati.

They give the fruits to Rama.

It also has the irregular command form *dehi*:

देहि मे फलम्!

dehi me phalam!

Give me a fruit!

dhā generally follows the same pattern as *dā*.

Endings of the *hu* class

The *hu* class generally uses the same *parasmaipada* endings as the other complex classes. In the present tense, we use *-ati* instead of *-anti*:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	जुहोति <i>juhōti</i>	जुहुतः <i>juhutaḥ</i>	जुह्वति <i>juhvati</i>
2nd	जुहोषि <i>juhoṣi</i>	जुहुथः <i>juhuthaḥ</i>	जुहुथ <i>juhutha</i>
1st	जुहोमि <i>juhomi</i>	जुहुवः <i>juhuvaḥ</i>	जुहुमः <i>juhumaḥ</i>

The command mood is normal, but we use the ending *-dhi* instead of *-hi*:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	जुहोतु <i>juhotu</i>	जुहुताम् <i>juhutām</i>	जुह्वतु <i>juhvatu</i>
2nd	जुहुधि <i>juhudhi</i>	जुहुतम् <i>juhutam</i>	जुहुत <i>juhuta</i>
1st	जुह्वानि <i>juhavāni</i>	जुह्वाव <i>juhavāva</i>	जुह्वाम <i>juhavāma</i>

The ordinary past tense is normal, but we use the ending *-uḥ* instead of *-an*. This ending causes a vowel change, so we get *ajuhavuḥ* instead of **ajuhuvuḥ*:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	अजुहोत् <i>ajuhot</i>	अजुहुताम् <i>ajuhutām</i>	अजुहवुः <i>ajuhavuh</i>
2nd	अजुहोः <i>ajuhoh</i>	अजुहुतम् <i>ajuhutam</i>	अजुहुत <i>ajuhuta</i>
1st	अजुहवम् <i>ajuhavam</i>	अजुहुव <i>ajuhuva</i>	अजुहुम <i>ajuhuma</i>

And the potential mood is normal:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	जुहुयात् <i>juhuyāt</i>	जुहुयाताम् <i>juhuyātām</i>	जुहुयुः <i>juhuyuh</i>
2nd	जुहुयाः <i>juhuyāḥ</i>	जुहुयातम् <i>juhuyātam</i>	जुहुयात <i>juhuyāta</i>
1st	जुहुयाम् <i>juhuyām</i>	जुहुयाव <i>juhuyāva</i>	जुहुयाम <i>juhuyāma</i>

The *ātmanepada* endings are the same as for the other complex classes.

Review

We have now seen all ten of the Sanskrit verb classes. Below, you can see all ten of these classes in their traditional order. We illustrate the *ad* class with the root *dviṣ*, and we leave the weak stem blank for roots in the simple verb classes:

Class	Strong stem	Weak stem
भू <i>bhū</i>	भव <i>bhava</i>	— —
अद् <i>ad</i>	द्वेष् <i>dveṣ</i>	द्विष् <i>dviṣ</i>
हु <i>hu</i>	जुहो <i>juho</i>	जुहु <i>juhu</i>
दिव् <i>div</i>	दीव्य <i>dīvya</i>	— —
सु <i>su</i>	सुनो <i>suno</i>	सुनु <i>sunu</i>
तुद् <i>tud</i>	तुद <i>tuda</i>	— —
रुध् <i>rudh</i>	रुनध् <i>runadh</i>	रुन्ध् <i>rundh</i>
तन् <i>tan</i>	तनो <i>tano</i>	तनु <i>tanu</i>
क्री <i>krī</i>	क्रीणा <i>krīṇā</i>	क्रीणी <i>krīṇī</i>
चुर् <i>cur</i>	चोरय <i>coraya</i>	— —

As you read and listen to more Sanskrit, you will be able to use these classes instinctively.

1. How do we double the root *dā*?
2. How do we double the root *bhī*?

karmaṇi and bhāve prayoga

Also known as: patientive and impersonal usage; the “passive voice”

We have now seen all of the ten classes of the special tense moods. We will end this topic by briefly discussing *prayoga*.

As a reminder, Sanskrit verbs use one of three *prayogas*. We have *kartari prayoga* (“agent usage”):

रामो नगरं गच्छति ।

rāmo nagaram gacchati.

Rama **goes** to the city.

कुम्भकर्णः स्वपिति ।

kumbhakarṇaḥ svapiti.

Kumbhakarna **sleeps**.

karmaṇi prayoga (“object usage”), which can be used if the verb uses an object:

रामेण नगरं गम्यते ।

rāmeṇa nagaram gamyate.

The city **is gone to** by Rama.

And *bhāve prayoga* (“stative usage”), which can be used if the verb doesn't use an object:

कुम्भकर्णेन सुप्यते ।

kumbhakarṇena supyate.

Kumbhakarna sleeps. (“**There is sleeping** by Kumbhakarna.”)

prayoga does not affect the meaning of the verb or the sentence. Instead, it is a different way of expressing the same information. It is like the difference between “I go to the store” and “The store was gone to by me.” Both express the same information, but their style and emphasis differ.

So far, all of the lessons in this topic have focused on *kartari prayoga*. In this topic, we will learn how to express the four special tense-moods in *karmaṇi prayoga* and *bhāve prayoga*:

रावणो हन्यते

rāvaṇo hanyate

Ravana is being killed.

रावणो हन्यताम्

rāvaṇo hanyatām

May Ravana be killed.

रावणो ऽहन्यत

rāvaṇo 'hanyata

Ravana was killed.

रावणो हन्येत

rāvaṇo hanyeta

Ravana might be killed.

Active, middle, passive voice

English-languages resources often use the terms “active,” “middle,” and “passive” voices to describe the various combinations of *prayoga* and *pada*:

- active voice: *kartari prayoga*, *parasmaipada*
- middle voice: *kartari prayoga*, *ātmanepada*
- passive voice: *karmaṇi* and *bhāve prayoga* (always *ātmanepada*)

These terms are workable, but they don't fit well with how Sanskrit works. So in our guide, we prefer to use the terms *pada* and *prayoga*.

A new stem

We express *karmaṇi prayoga* and *bhāve prayoga* in similar ways. First, we add the suffix *ya* to the root:

नी + य → नीय

nī + ya → nīya

lead → be led

Then we use *ātmanepada* endings. In *karmaṇi prayoga*, the person and number should agree with the *object* of the sentence:

अहं गजान् नयामि ।

ahaṃ gajān nayāmi.

I lead the elephants.

(Verb is first-person singular like *aham*)

मया गजा नीयन्ते ।

mayā gajā nīyante.

By me, the elephants are led.

(Verb is third-person plural like *gajāḥ*)

And in *bhāve prayoga*, we use the third person singular:

मया सुप्यते ।

mayā supyate.

I sleep. (“There is sleeping by me”)

नरैः सुप्यते ।

naraiḥ supyate.

The men sleep. (“There is sleeping by the men”)

Adding the -ya suffix

Generally, we can add -ya directly to the root:

नी → नीयते

nī → nīyate

lead → is led

But roots that end in short vowels use a long vowel:

जि → जीयते

ji → jīyate

conquer → is conquered

Roots that end in -ā and -ai usually use -ī instead:

स्था → स्थीयते

sthā → *sthīyate*

stand → is stood or stationed

गै → गीयते

gai → *gīyate*

sing → is sung

दा → दीयते

dā → *dīyate*

give → is given

If the root ends in *-ṛ*, that *-ṛ* becomes *-ri*:

कृ → क्रियते

kṛ → *kriyate*

do → is done

But it becomes *-ar* if it follows a consonant cluster:

स्मृ → स्मर्यते

smṛ → *smaryate*

remember → is remembered

Roots that end in *ṛ* use *-īr*, or *-ūr* if the root starts with a “lip” consonant:

तृ → तीर्यते

tṛ → *tīryate*

cross → is crossed

पृ → पूर्यते

pṛ → *pūryate*

fill → is filled

Finally, a few roots undergo an interesting change. Their semivowels become vowels, and any other vowels they have are removed:

वच् → उच्यते

vac → *ucyate*

speak → is spoken, is said

स्वप् → सुष्यते

svap → *supyate*

sleep → there is sleeping

यज् → इज्यते

yaj → *ijyate*

sacrifice → is sacrificed

प्रछ् → पृच्छ्यते

prach → *prcchyate*

ask → is asked

This change is called **samprasāraṇa** in traditional grammar.

The intuition behind **samprasāraṇa**

There is a clear intuition behind **samprasāraṇa**. Roughly, roots that use **samprasāraṇa** have already been strengthened. But they have all been strengthened in an unusual way: the *a* vowel has been added *after* the root vowel, not before it.

So when we use **samprasāraṇa** roots, we often must weaken the root back to the normal level. We do so by removing the *a* sound and undoing any sandhi changes.

Review

karmaṇi prayoga is common in Sanskrit, so it is worth knowing well. *bhāve prayoga* is much less common, but it still appears occasionally.

1. Do we use *parasmaipada* endings in *karmaṇi* and *bhāve prayoga*?

Verbs 2: Other tense-moods

Other tense-moods

Also known as: *ārdhadhātuka* verbs

This topic depends on some material from *Verbs 1*. Before you begin, please read *Verbs 1* until the end of the lesson on *ātmanepada* endings.

In the core lessons, we learned that we can change a verb *root* into a verb *stem*. And once we have a verb stem, we can add endings to that stem to create a complete *verb*. In the examples below, note the progression from root to stem to verb:

नी → नेष्य → नेष्यामि

nī → *neṣya* → *neṣyāmi*

lead → will lead → I will lead

नी → निनी → निन्युः

nī → *ninī* → *ninyuḥ*

lead → led (long ago) → they led (long ago)

We also learned that Sanskrit verbs express five basic kinds of information: *person*, *number*, *tense-mood*, *prayoga*, and *pada*.

Sanskrit uses ten different tense-moods. Four of these tense-moods use very similar stems in *kartari prayoga*, and the stem depends on which *verb class* a root belongs to:

नी → नय → नयति

nī → *naya* → *nayati*

(*bhū* class)

सु → सुनु → सुनोति

su → *sunu* → *sunoti*

(*su* class)

क्री → क्रीणा → क्रीणाति

krī → *krīṇā* → *krīṇāti*

(*krī* class)

But the other six tense-moods form their stems in a more general way. We apply the same steps regardless of which verb class a root belongs to. For example, consider the three verbs below. They each use verbs from different verb classes, but they form their stems in an identical way:

नी → नेष्यति

nī → *neṣyati*

सु → सोष्यति

su → *soṣyati*

क्री → क्रेष्यति

krī → *kreṣyati*

In this topic, we will explore these six tense-moods.

Common behavior for the six tense-moods

Recall that for the special tense-moods, we use a special stem in *karmanī prayoga* and *bhāve prayoga*. This special stem uses the suffix *-ya*:

नयसि

nayasi

You lead.

(*kartari prayoga*)

नीयसे

nīyase

You are led.

(*karmanī prayoga*)

But for the other tense-moods, we just use *ātmanepada* endings without using a different stem:

नेष्यति।

neṣyati.

You will lead.

नेष्यते।

neṣyate.

You will be led.

Many verbs will also add an extra *i* sound between the root and the ending. In the examples below, notice that each verb has an extra *i* sound:

भू → भविष्यसि (भव्-इ-ष्यसि)

bhū → bhaviṣyasi (bhav-i-ṣyasi)

you will become

स्मृ → स्मरिष्यसि (स्मर्-इ-ष्यसि)

smṛ → smariṣyasi (smar-i-ṣyasi)

you will remember

In traditional grammar, this *i* is called *iṭ*. Different roots use *iṭ* in different ways:

- Some roots always use *iṭ*, and they are called **set** (*sa-iṭ*, “with *iṭ*”) roots.
- Other roots don't use *iṭ*, and they are called **anīṭ** (*an-iṭ*, “without *iṭ*”) roots.
- A third group of roots uses *iṭ* optionally, and they are called **vet** (*vā-iṭ*, “optional *iṭ*”) roots.

Finally, roots that end in *-e*, *-ai*, or *-au* will have their last vowel change to *-ā*:

गै → गास्यति

gai → gāsyati

sing → will sing

Review

1. How do we express *karmaṇi prayoga* for the special tense-moods?
2. How do we express *karmaṇi prayoga* for the other tense-moods?
3. What is *iṭ*?

The simple future tense

Also known as: the *s* future, the second future, *bhaviṣyan* (“future”), *lṛṭ*

The **simple future tense** refers to events that have not yet occurred:

गम् → गमिष्यामि

gam → *gamiṣyāmi*

go → I will go.

We call this the *simple* future tense because Sanskrit has another tense-mood that refers specifically to *distant* future events.

Making the stem

To make the stem of the simple future tense, we strengthen the root's vowel and add *-sya* to the end of the root. Some roots don't use *iṭ*:

नी → नेष्य

nī → *neṣya*

lead → will lead

and others do:

वन्द् → वन्दिष्य

vand → *vandiṣya*

venerate → will venerate

In these examples, note that *-sya* becomes *-ṣya* due to a sandhi rule. *s* becomes *ṣ* after most vowels and after *r* and *k* sounds. For details, see our lessons on consonant sandhi.

We also add *iṭ* if the root ends in *r*:

कृ → करिष्य

kr → *kariṣya*

do → will do

स्मृ → स्मरिष्य

smṛ → *smariṣya*

remember → will remember

And a few other roots use *iṭ* here as well:

गम् → गमिष्य

gam → *gamiṣya*

go → will go

Since *sya* starts with a consonant, it may cause many sandhi changes if the root ends with a consonant. Here are some examples:

लभ् → लप्स्य

labh → *lapsya*

obtain → will obtain

बुध् → भोत्स्य

budh → *bhotsya*

awaken → will awaken

दह् → धक्ष्य

dah → *dhakṣya*

burn → will burn

Finally, there are several slightly irregular stems. Here are some common ones:

दृश् → द्रक्ष्य

drś → *drakṣya*

see → will see

मन् → मंस्य

man → *maṁsya*

think → will think

Adding endings

We use the same ending and *pada* as we would in the present tense. In the examples below, the first result on the right is in the present tense, and the second is in the simple future tense:

गम् → गच्छति, गमिष्यति

gam → *gacchati*, *gamiṣyati*

go → goes, will go

लभ् → लभते, लप्स्यते

labh → *labhate*, *lapsyate*

obtain → obtains, will obtain

कृ → करोति, करिष्यति

kr → *karoti*, *kariṣyati*

do → does, will do

कृ → कुरुते, करिष्यते

kr → *kurute*, *kariṣyate*

do → does, will do

Review

1. What suffix do we use to create the stem of the simple future?
2. Which endings do we use in the simple future?

The conditional mood

Also known as: *saṃketaḥ* (“condition”), *lṛṇ*

The **conditional mood** describes situations that *would* happen or *would have* happened. In other words, it is used for hypothetical situations. Here is a classic example:

दक्षिणेन चेद् आयास्यन् न शकटं पर्याभविष्यत्

dakṣiṇena ced āyāsyān na śakaṭaṃ paryābhaviṣyat

If he **would come** by the southern road, the cart **would not overturn**.

To form the conditional, we start with the stem from the simple future:

नी → नेष्य

nī → neṣya

lead → will lead

Then we use this stem as if we were using the ordinary past tense:

अनेष्यत्

aneṣyat

would lead, would have led

You can compare the conditional and the ordinary past in the examples below. In each example, the right side has two results. The first result uses the ordinary past and the second uses the conditional:

नी → अनयत्, अनेष्यत्

nī → anayat, aneṣyat

lead → led, **would do**

कृ → अकरोत्, अकरिष्यत्

kr → akarot, akariṣyat

do → did, **would do**

(parasmaipada)

कृ → अकुरुत, अकरिष्यत

kr → *akuruta*, *akariṣyata*

do → did, would do

(*ātmanepada*)

The conditional mood is rare. So why are we studying it now? We are studying it now because it is so similar to the tense-moods we have studied already.

Review

1. What does the conditional mean?

The distant future tense

Also known as: the periphrastic future, the first future, *anadyanate bhaviṣyan* (“future not of today”), *luṭ*

The **distant future tense** traditionally refers to future actions that will not happen soon. In Sanskrit, it is called *an-adyatana* (“not of today”). Here is an example of the distant future tense:

रामो नेता ।

rāmo netā.

Rama will (eventually) lead.

Compared to the simple future tense, the distant future tense describes events that are further away. It also has a more definite sense than the simple future:

रामो नेता ।

rāmo netā.

Rama will (surely and eventually) lead.

Since *netā* is also a nominal word that means “leader,” we can also interpret this sentence in a different way:

रामो नेता ।

rāmo netā.

Rama is a leader.

Usually, we can choose the correct interpretation if we consider the sentence's context.

Making the stem

We form the stem by strengthening the root and adding the suffix *-tā*:

नी → नेता

nī → netā

lead → will lead

As usual, some roots will use *iṭ*:

वन्द् → वन्दिता

vand → *vanditā*

Since *-tā* starts with a consonant, many sandhi changes might occur:

बुध् → बोद्धा

budh → *boddhā*

awaken → will awaken

दृश् → द्रष्टा

drś → *draṣṭā*

see → will see

Adding endings

Here are the endings we use with *parasmaipada* roots:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	नेता <i>netā</i>	नेतारौ <i>netārau</i>	नेतारः <i>netāraḥ</i>
2nd	नेतासि <i>netāsi</i>	नेतास्थः <i>netāsthaḥ</i>	नेतास्थ <i>netāstha</i>
1st	नेतास्मि <i>netāsmi</i>	नेतास्वः <i>netāsvaḥ</i>	नेतास्मः <i>netāsmāḥ</i>

If you have read some of our lessons on nominals, you might recognize the forms we use here in the third person. *netā*, *netārau*, and *netāraḥ* are the masculine case 1 forms of the stem *netṛ* (“leader”). The distant future is a combination of this stem and the forms of the root *as* (“be,” “exist”):

नेता + असि → नेतासि

netā + *asi* → *netāsi*

नेता + अस्मि → नेतास्मि

netā + asmi → netāsmi

Here are the endings we use with *ātmanepada* roots:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	नेता <i>netā</i>	नेतारौ <i>netārau</i>	नेतारः <i>netāraḥ</i>
2nd	नेतासे <i>netāse</i>	नेतासाथे <i>netāsāthe</i>	नेताध्वे <i>netādhve</i>
1st	नेताहे <i>netāhe</i>	नेतास्वहे <i>netāsvahe</i>	नेतास्महे <i>netāasmahe</i>

Review

1. What is the difference in meaning between the distant future and the simple future?

The distant past tense

Also known as: the perfect, *parokṣe bhūta* (“remote past”), *liṭ*

The **distant past tense** usually describes historical or legendary events:

नी → निनाय

nī → *nināya*

lead → led (long ago)

Certain types of Sanskrit literature use the distant past tense often. For example, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* both use the distant past tense extensively.

The distant past tense uses many irregular forms. So in this lesson, we will focus just on its most common patterns.

If the information here is overwhelming, skip to the Review at the bottom to see just the essential information.

Strong and weak stems

The distant past tense has two stems: a **strong stem** and a **weak stem**. We use the strong stem with singular *parasmaipada* endings:

निनी + अ → निनाय

ninī + *a* → *nināya*

someone led (long ago, *parasmaipada*)

And the weak stem with all other endings:

निनी + उः → निन्युः

ninī + *uḥ* → *ninyuḥ*

they led (long ago, *parasmaipada*)

निनी + इरे → निन्यिरे

ninī + *ire* → *ninyire*

they led (long ago, *ātmanepada*)

Rules of doubling

Also known as: *dvitva*

Generally, we make the stem of this tense-mood by doubling the root. Then we apply some basic rules to simplify the *first* copy of the root.

Although each of these rules is basic, there are quite a few of them. As usual, we recommend that you don't waste time memorizing these rules. Instead, simply get a feel for the kinds of changes that occur. As you read more Sanskrit, you will naturally start to assimilate and internalize them.

When doubling, long vowels become short:

दा दा → ददा

dā dā → dadā

give

नी नी → निनी

nī nī → ninī

lead

Aspirated sounds become unaspirated:

धा धा → दधा

dhā dhā → dadhā

place

All consonants after the double's vowel are removed:

बुध् बुध् → बुबुध्

budh budh → bubudh

awaken

अस् अस् → आस्

as as → ās

be, exist

And if a root starts in multiple consonants, only one of them is kept. We usually keep the second consonant:

स्तु स्तु → तुष्टु

stu stu → tuṣṭu

praise

स्था स्था → तस्था

sthā sthā → tasthā

stand

But if the second consonant is nasal, we keep the first:

स्मृ स्मृ → सस्मृ

smṛ smṛ → sasmṛ

remember

Sounds pronounced at the soft palate (*ka*) shift to the hard palate (*ca*):

गा गा → जगा

gā gā → jagā

sing

ṛ, *ṝ*, and *ḷ* become *a*:

कृ कृ → चकृ

kṛ kṛ → cakṛ

do

तृ तृ → ततृ

tṛ tṛ → tatṛ

cross

क्लृप् → चक्लृप्

klp → caklp

be fit for

Roots that allow *samprasāraṇa* will use it:

वच् वच् → उवच्

vac vac → uvac

speak

यज् यज् → इयज्

yaj yaj → iyaj

sacrifice

वद् वद् → उवद्

vad vad → uvad

say

For details on *samprasāraṇa*, see our lesson on [the special tenses in *karmani* and *bhāve prayoga*](#).

Finally, here is a common exception:

भू → बभू

bhū → babhū

become

There are various other small rules. But these are the basic patterns. Rather than memorize these changes, read over the examples above and get a basic feeling for what kinds of sound changes occur.

Making the stem

Roots with one vowel generally use the *doubling* procedure we described above:

कृ → चकृ

kr̥ → cakr̥

do

For the weak stem, some roots lose their vowel completely. Here are some common examples:

जजन् + ए → जज्ञे

jajan + e → jajñe

was born

जगम् + उः → जग्मुः

jagam + uḥ → jagmuḥ

they went

Roots that allow *samprasāraṇa* will use it again:

उवच् → उ + उच् → ऊचुः

uvac → u + uc → ūcuḥ

the spoke

इयज् → इ + इज् → ईजुः

iyaj → i + ij → ījuḥ

they sacrificed

उवद् → उ + उद् → ऊदुः

uvad → u + ud → ūduḥ

they said

Under very specific conditions, we may also get this weak stem:

शक् → शेकुः

śak → śekuḥ

they were able

मन् → मेनिरे

man → menire

they thought

The specific conditions are:

1. The root vowel is *a*.
2. *a* has exactly one consonant on either side of it.
3. The doubled root starts with the same sound as the original root.

To make these conditions clear, here are some examples of roots that violate these conditions. Since they violate these conditions, they use the normal weak stem we described above:

शुच् → शुशुचुः

śuc → *śuśucuḥ*

They grieved.

(violates condition 1 because the root vowel is not *a*.)

नन्द् → ननन्दुः

nand → *nananduh*

They delighted.

(violates condition 2 because *a* is followed by two consonants)

गण् → जगणुः

gaṇ → *jagaṇuh*

They counted.

(violates condition 3 because the double does not start with *g*.)

A special form for derived roots

For derived roots and roots in the *cur* class, we use a simple procedure. First, we add *-ām* to the root:

बोधि → बोधयाम्

bodhi → *bodhayām*

wake someone up

Then, we use this result with the roots *kr*, *bhū*, or *as*:

बोधयाञ्चकार

bodhayāñcakāra

woke (someone) up

बोधयाम्बभूव

bodhayāmbabhūva

woke (someone) up

बोधयामास

bodhayāmāsa

woke (someone) up

You might also see these results written as separate words:

बोधयां चकार

bodhayāṃ cakāra

woke (someone) up

बोधयां बभूव

bodhayāṃ babhūva

woke (someone) up

बोधयाम् आस

bodhayām āsa

woke (someone) up

Adding *parasmaipada* endings

The distant past tense uses special *parasmaipada* endings:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	अ <i>a</i>	अतुस् <i>atus</i>	उस् <i>us</i>
2nd	थ <i>tha</i>	अथुस् <i>athus</i>	अ <i>a</i>
1st	अ <i>a</i>	व <i>va</i>	म <i>ma</i>

If the *parasmaipada* ending is singular, we use the strong stem. Otherwise, we use the weak stem.

The *-a* endings in the singular cause an unusual change. Roots that end in vowels usually strengthen to the strongest level:

नी → निनाय

nī → *nināya*

lead → led

कृ → चकार

kṛ → *cakāra*

do → did

And roots whose second to last sound is a vowel strengthen that vowel to *e*, *o*, or *ā*:

विश् → विवेश

viś → *viveśa*

enter → entered

शुच् → शुशोच

śuc → *śuśoca*

grieve → grieved

हस् → जहास

has → *jahāsa*

laugh → laughed

The first-person singular *a* has an optional form that uses a medium level of strengthening:

कृ → चकार, चकर

kṛ → *cakāra*, *cakara*

do → I did (long ago)

To make these endings clear, here are the forms of the root *kṛ*:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	चकार <i>cakāra</i>	चक्रतुस् <i>cakratus</i>	चक्रुस् <i>cakrus</i>
2nd	चकर्थ <i>cakartha</i>	चक्रथुस् <i>cakrathus</i>	चक्र <i>cakra</i>
1st	चकार, चकर <i>cakāra, cakara</i>	चकृव <i>cakṛva</i>	चकृम <i>cakṛma</i>

But if the root ends in *-ā*, we use the ending *-au* in the singular instead of *-a*. To make this clear, here are the forms of the root *sthā*. Note that *sthā* also has an optional version in the second-person singular:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	तस्थौ <i>tasthau</i>	तस्थतुः <i>tasthatuḥ</i>	तस्थुः <i>tasthuḥ</i>
2nd	तस्थाथ, तस्थिथ <i>tasthātha, tasthitha</i>	तस्थथुः <i>tasthathuḥ</i>	तस्थ <i>tastha</i>
1st	तस्थौ <i>tasthau</i>	तस्थिव <i>tasthiva</i>	तस्थिम <i>tasthima</i>

Adding *ātmanepada* endings

We generally use the standard *ātmanepada* endings of the present tense. The exceptions are the new endings *e* and *ire* in the third person:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	ए <i>e</i>	आते <i>āte</i>	इरे <i>ire</i>
2nd	से <i>se</i>	आथे <i>āthe</i>	ध्वे <i>dhve</i>
1st	ए <i>e</i>	वहे <i>vahe</i>	महे <i>mahe</i>

Again, here are the forms of the root *kṛ*:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	चक्रे <i>cakre</i>	चक्राते <i>cakrāte</i>	चक्रिरे <i>cakrīre</i>
2nd	चकृषे <i>cakṛṣe</i>	चक्राथे <i>cakrāthe</i>	चकृध्वे <i>cakṛdhve</i>
1st	चक्रे <i>cakre</i>	चकृवहे <i>cakṛvahe</i>	चकृमहे <i>cakṛmahe</i>

Note the change from *dhve* to *ḍhve*, which is common in the distant past tense.

Review

The distant past tense has many complicated patterns. The best way to get used to it, as usual, is to read a lot of Sanskrit.

But if you are feeling overwhelmed by the number of details here, here are the simple essentials you can remember and use:

1. You can usually recognize this tense by its doubled sound. You don't need to remember the details of how the stem is formed or how the doubling is done, as long as you can recognize that *something* has been doubled.
2. This tense is almost always used in the third person, and its singular and plural forms are by far the most common. You can ignore the other endings for now.
3. The context of the sentence will help make the meaning of the verb clear.

The recent past tense

Also known as: the aorist, *bhūta* (“past”), *luṅ*

Traditionally, the **recent past tense** refers to any past action regardless of time period:

अश्रौषम्

aśrauṣam

I heard.

But recall that Sanskrit has three past tenses. Since the ordinary past tense traditionally refers to non-recent (*anadyatana*, “not of today”) events, and since the distant past tense refers to distant (*parokṣa*, “unwitnessed”) events, only this tense can refer to very recent past events. That is why we call it the *recent* past tense.

The recent past tense often has the sense of having *just* done something:

अश्रौषम्

aśrauṣam

I have heard.

This tense is rare and complicated. Here, we will focus only on a few of its common patterns.

Making the stem

We make the stem of the recent past tense in many different patterns. Some roots use certain patterns, and other roots use other patterns.

Some roots are completely unchanged:

भू → अभूः

bhū → *abhūḥ*

become → you have become

Others use a connecting -a vowel:

गम् → अगमः

gam → *agamaḥ*

go → you have gone

A third group doubles in a special way:

नश् → अनीनशत्

naś → *anīnaśat*

perish, be destroyed → it has perished

A fourth group strengthens with the suffix *-siṣ*:

नम् → अनंसिषम्

nam → *anaṁsiṣam*

bow → I have bowed

A fifth group uses *-sa*:

श्रु → अश्रौषम्

śru → *aśrauṣam*

hear → I have heard

And there are other minor patterns, too.

Adding endings

Generally, these stems use the endings of the ordinary past tense.

The recent past tense without *a-*

Here is a common pattern worth knowing. We can use the forms of the recent past tense with a word like *mā* (“don’t”) to state commands:

मा गमः ।

mā gamaḥ.

Don't go.

मा भैषीः ।

mā bhaiṣīḥ.

Don't fear.

This command doesn't have any “past” meaning. It is just an alternate way of giving a command.

The blessing mood

Also known as: the benedictive, *āśīḥ* (“hope, wish”), *āśīrlīṇ*

This lesson depends on material from the “*karmaṇi* and *bhāve prayoga*” lesson from *Verbs 1*.

The **blessing mood** usually expresses a blessing or prayer:

शुभं भूयात्
śubhaṃ bhūyāt

May there be welfare (to all).

Like the recent past tense, the blessing mood is rare.

Making the stem

Roots that use *parasmaipada* endings generally use the same -ya stem that we use in *karmaṇi* and *bhāve prayoga* for the special tense-moods:

गम् → गम्य → गम्यात्
gam → *gamyā* → *gamyāt*
go → go → may (someone) go

वच् → उच्य → उच्यात्
vac → *ucyā* → *ucyāt*
speak → speak → may (someone) speak

But even though these forms use a similar stem, they have the sense of *kartari prayoga*.

For *ātmanepada* endings, we strengthen the root but don't add any special suffixes.

Adding endings

Here are the ends we add for *parasmaipada* roots:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	यात् <i>yāt</i>	याताम् <i>yātām</i>	यासुः <i>yāsuḥ</i>
2nd	याः <i>yāḥ</i>	यास्तम् <i>yāstam</i>	यास्त <i>yāsta</i>
1st	यासम् <i>yāsam</i>	यास्व <i>yāsva</i>	यास्म <i>yāsma</i>

These endings are similar to the ones we use for the potential mood. The difference is that we add -yās- to the beginning of each ending.

Here is an example of how to use these endings:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	नीयात् <i>nīyāt</i>	नीयाताम् <i>nīyātām</i>	नीयासुः <i>nīyāsuḥ</i>
2nd	नीयाः <i>nīyāḥ</i>	नीयास्तम् <i>nīyāstam</i>	नीयास्त <i>nīyāsta</i>
1st	नीयासम् <i>nīyāsam</i>	नीयास्व <i>nīyāsva</i>	नीयास्म <i>nīyāsma</i>

The blessing mood is quite rare, and its *ātmanepada* forms are even rarer. Here are the *ātmanepada* endings we use:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	सीष्ट <i>sīṣṭa</i>	सीयास्ताम् <i>sīyāstām</i>	सीरन् <i>sīran</i>
2nd	सीष्ठाः <i>sīṣṭhāḥ</i>	सीयास्थाम् <i>sīyāsthām</i>	सीध्वम् <i>sīdhvam</i>
1st	सीय <i>sīya</i>	सीवहि <i>sīvahi</i>	सीमहि <i>sīmahi</i>

Again, these endings are similar to the ones we use for the potential mood. The difference is that we add *-sīs-* to the beginning of each ending. This *-sīs* becomes *-sī-* if the ending starts with a voiced sound.

Here is an example of how to use these endings:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
3rd	नेषीष्ट <i>neṣīṣṭa</i>	नेषीयास्ताम् <i>neṣīyāstām</i>	नेषीरन् <i>neṣīran</i>
2nd	नेषीष्ठाः <i>neṣīṣṭhāḥ</i>	नेषीयास्थाम् <i>neṣīyāsthām</i>	नेषीध्वम् <i>neṣīdhvam</i>
1st	नेषीय <i>neṣīya</i>	नेषीवहि <i>neṣīvahi</i>	नेषीमहि <i>neṣīmahi</i>

Note that the first *s* of these endings changed due to sandhi.

Review

1. How do we form the *parasmaipada* stem for this tense-mood?

Verbs 3: Derived roots

Causal roots

Also known as: causative roots, *ṇijanta* (“ending in the *ṇic* affix”)

In the core lessons, we learned that we can create new verb roots from existing ones. These **derived roots** modify the root's basic meaning in some way. Once we have a derived root, we can use it the same way we would use any verb root.

One of the most common derived roots is the **causal root**. You can see some examples of causal roots below:

नी → नायि → नाययति

nī → *nāyi* → *nāyayati*

lead → make lead → they make (someone) lead

चर् → चारि → चारयति

car → *cāri* → *cārayati*

walk → make walk → they make (someone) walk

Some causal roots might also have a more idiomatic meaning:

गमयति

gamayati

makes go; passes (time), leads (someone)

Making the root

We make the causal root by adding *-i* to the end of the original root.

Roots that end in vowels strengthen to the strongest level:

नी → नायि

nī → *nāyi*

lead → make lead

भू → भावि

bhū → *bhāvi*

become → make become

कृ → कारि

kr̥ → *kāri*

do → make do

Other vowels often strengthen to *e* or *o*:

शुच् → शोचि

śuc → *śoci*

grieve → make grieve

Roots that end in *-ā* generally use an extra *-p-* sound. Roots that end in *-e*, *-ai*, or *-o* have their final vowel changed to *-ā*:

स्था → स्थापि

sthā → *sthāpi*

stand → make stand

गै → गापि

gai → *gāpi*

sing → make sing

दा → दापि

dā → *dāpi*

give → make give

And there are a few irregular changes:

गम् → गमि

gam → *gami*

go → make go

हन् → घाति

han → *ghāti*

kill, strike → make strike

Using the root

We treat this root like a member of the *bhū* class and can use either *parasmaipada* or *ātmanepada* endings:

कारि → कारयति

kāri → *kārayati*

make do → makes do

कारि → कारयिष्यति

kāri → *kārayiṣyati*

make do → will make do

कारि → कारयां चकार

kāri → *kārayāṃ cakāra*

make do → made do (long ago)

Desiderative roots

Also known as: *sannanta* (“ending in the *san* affix”)

This lesson depends on material from *Verbs 2*.

Desiderative roots have a complex name but express a simple idea. Simply, they express the idea of *wanting to* do something.

जिगमिषामि

jigamiṣāmi

I **want to** go.

A few roots create this derived root without any sense of “wanting”. These derived roots usually have special idiomatic meanings:

तिज् → तितिक्षति

tij → titikṣati

be sharp → endures

गुप् → जुगुप्सति

gup → jugupsati

protect → detests, despises

मन् → मीमांसति

man → mīmāṃsati

think → investigates

Making the root

We double the root and add -s to the root. Some roots will use the connecting *it* vowel as well.

When we studied the distant past tense, we learned some of the basic rules of doubling. The desiderative root follows similar rules but with a few small changes.

First, the *a* in the doubled root sound changes to *i*:

स्था → तिष्ठास्

sthā → *tiṣṭhās*

stand → want to stand

Roots ending in a short vowel use a long vowel:

स्तु → तुष्टस्

stu → *tuṣṭūs*

praise → want to praise

श्रु → शुश्रूष्

śru → *śuśrūṣ*

hear → want to hear; attend or serve (idiomatic meaning)

Roots ending in -ṛ or -ṝ generally change their final vowel to -īṛ:

कृ → चिकीर्ष्

kṛ → *cikīṛṣ*

do → want to do

तृ → तितीर्ष्

tṛ → *titīṛṣ*

cross → want to cross

but use -ūr if the vowel follows a “lip” consonant (*pa*):

पृ → पुपूर्ष्

pṛ → *pupūrṣ*

fill → want to fill

मृ → मुमूर्ष्

mṛ → *mumūrṣ*

die → “want to die”; be about to die

Here are some common irregular roots:

आप् → ईप्स्

āp → *īps*

obtain → want to obtain

लभ् → लिप्स्

labh → *lips*

obtain → want to obtain

Using the root

Desiderative roots generally use the same *pada* as the original root:

लभसे → लिप्ससे

labhase → *lipsase*

you obtain → you want to obtain

करोमि → चिकीर्षामि

karomi → *cikīrṣāmi*

I do → I want to do

(*parasmaipada*)

कुर्वे → चिकीर्षे

kurve → *cikīrṣe*

I do → I want to do

(*ātmanepada*)

For the special tense-moods, we use this root as if it were part of the *tud* class:

चिकीर्षन्ति

cikīrṣanti

they want to do

जिगमिषेत्

jigamiṣet

(someone) might want to go

For the distant past tense, we use the suffix *-ām*:

जिगमिषां चकार

jigamiṣāṃ cakāra

(someone) wanted to go (long ago)

Nominal roots

Also known as: denominative verbs, *nāmadhātu* (“nominal roots”)

There are various suffixes that turn a nominal stem into a verb root. Here, we will share the most common of these suffixes.

First is the suffix *-i*. This suffix is the most common, and we use it in the same way as the causal suffix *-i*:

मिश्र → मिश्रयति

miśra → *miśrayati*

mixed → mixes

मूत्र → मूत्रयति

mūtra → *mūtrayati*

urine, pee → urinates, pees

व्रत → व्रतयति

vrata → *vratayati*

vow → observes a vow

Next is the suffix *-ya*, which generally changes the stem's final *a* to *ī*. *-ya* also usually lengthens the stem's final vowel:

पुत्र → पुत्रीयति

putra → *putrīyati*

son → wants a son

कवि → कवीयति

kavi → *kavīyati*

poet → wants a poet

We might also consider the suffix *-kāmya*:

पुत्र → पुत्रकाम्यति

putra → *putrakāmyati*

son → wants a son

यशस् → यशस्काम्यति

yaśas → *yaśaskāmyati*

fame → wants fame

Intensive roots

Also known as: frequentative roots, *yañanta* (“ending in the affix *yañ*”)

Intensive roots show that an action was done in an intense or frequent way:

लपति → लालप्यते

lapati → *lālapyate*

laments → repeatedly laments

With verbs of motion, the intensive implies crooked or difficult motion:

जङ्गम्यते

jaṅgamyate

goes crookedly

And for certain roots, the intensive implies blameworthy or inept action:

लोलुप्यते

lolupyate

cuts badly

Although intensive roots can be used with *parasmaipada* endings, such forms are very rare. Here, we will focus on the form used with *ātmanepada* endings.

Making the root

Generally, roots that start with vowels and roots in the *cur* class cannot make intensive roots. But most other roots can.

To make the intensive root, we use a special kind of doubling. First, we add the suffix *-ya*, which causes the same changes as the *karmaṇi prayoga-ya* suffix we used for the special tense-moods:

लुप् → लुप्य

lup → *lupya*

Then, we double the root according to the normal rules:

लुप्य → लु लुप्य

lupya → lu lupya

Finally, we strengthen the double's vowel:

लु लुप्य → लोलुप्य

lu lupya → lolupya

Here are some other examples:

भू → बोभूय

bhū → bobhūya

repeatedly be

कृ → चेक्रीय

kr̥ → cekrīya

repeatedly do

And a common exception if *r̥* is the middle vowel:

सृप् → सरीसृप्य

sṛp → sarīsṛpya

repeatedly creep; creep along

वृत् → वरीवृत्य

vṛt → varīvṛtya

repeatedly turn

नृत् → नरीनृत्य

nṛt → narīnṛtya

repeatedly dance

Using the root

The intensive roots always use *ātmanepada* endings:

जङ्गम्यते

jaṅgamyate

goes crookedly

For the special tense-moods, we use these roots as if they were part of the *div* class:

नरीनृत्येत

narīnr̥tyeta

might repeatedly dance

And for the distant past tense, we use the suffix *-ām*:

लोलुप्यां चक्रे

lolupyāṃ cakre

(someone) cut badly (long ago)

Uninflected words

Types of uninflected words

In Sanskrit, we often modify a word's sounds to change its meaning. We often modify both verbs:

गम् → गमिष्यसि

gam → *gamiṣyasi*

go → You will go.

And nominals:

नर → नरेषु

nara → *nareṣu*

man → among the men

These kinds of changes are called **inflection**. Sanskrit uses inflection extensively, so it is sometimes called a *highly inflected* language.

Sanskrit also has a large class of words that we can call **uninflected words** (*avyayāni*, “unchanging”), sometimes also called **indeclinables** in English. These words are “fixed” in a way that nominals and verbs are not. Uninflected words can still go through sandhi changes, but otherwise, they always stay the same:

त्वं न गच्छसि ।

tvaṃ na gacchasi.

You do **not** go.

अहं न गमिष्यामि ।

ahaṃ na gamiṣyāmi.

I will **not** go.

गजा न गच्छेयुः ।

gajā na gaccheyuḥ.

The elephants might **not** go.

Types of uninflected words

There are a few important categories of uninflected words.

First are what we might call **prepositions**. In English, this term refers to words like “over,” “under,” “around,” and so on. In Sanskrit, this term refers to words that are usually used as verb prefixes:

गच्छन्ति → आगच्छन्ति

gacchanti → *āgacchanti*

They go. → They come (“go **here**”).

गच्छन्ति → संगच्छन्ति

gacchanti → *saṃgacchanti*

They go. → They meet (“go **together**”).

Prepositions are part of a larger class of words call **nipātāḥ**, which are miscellaneous words:

रामः सीता च

rāmaḥ sītā ca

Rama **and** Sita

हे राम त्वं कुत्र?

he rāma tvaṃ kutra?

Hey Rama! Where are you?

Finally, we have **adverbs**, which modify the verb in some way. Many of them are created from adjectives:

मन्द → मन्दम्

manda → *mandam*

slow → **slowly**

The *upasarga*

Also known as: the preverb, the preposition, the verb prefix

In traditional grammar, verb prefixes are considered a type of uninflected word.

We learned about several different verb prefixes in the core lessons:

गच्छन्ति → समागच्छन्ति

gacchanti → *samāgacchanti*

they go → they come together; they convene (“go **together here**”)

These verb prefixes are part of a list of twenty special uninflected words. When these words are used as verb prefixes, they are called *upasargas*. But these words have other meanings and uses, too.

The list

Word	Basic meaning
अति <i>ati</i>	beyond, over, excessive
अधि <i>adhi</i>	above, over
अनु <i>anu</i>	after, along
अप <i>apa</i>	away from
अपि <i>api</i>	close to
अभि <i>abhi</i>	towards
अव <i>ava</i>	down, downward
आ <i>ā</i>	here, near
उद् <i>ud</i>	up, upward
उप <i>upa</i>	next to, under
दुस् <i>dus</i>	bad, difficult
नि <i>ni</i>	in, into
निस् <i>nis</i>	out, out of

परा <i>parā</i>	far away, gone
परि <i>pari</i>	around, about
प्र <i>pra</i>	forward
प्रति <i>prati</i>	backward, against
वि <i>vi</i>	apart, separate
सम् <i>sam</i>	together; complete, full
सु <i>su</i>	good, easy

How to use an *upasarga*

An *upasarga* usually does one of three things. First, it might change the root's meaning in a straightforward way:

गच्छन्ति → संगच्छन्ति

gacchanti → *samgacchanti*

they go → they meet (“go together”)

नयन्ति → संनयन्ति

nayanti → *samnayanti*

they lead → They unite (“lead (others) together”)

Second, it might create a totally new meaning. This new meaning usually depends on cultural context:

गच्छन्ति → अवगच्छन्ति

gacchanti → *avagacchanti*

they go → they understand

Third, it might intensify the root's basic meaning or leave it unchanged:

जयति → संजयति

jayati → *saṃjayati*

they conquer → they (intensely or fully) conquer

We can also use multiple *upasargas* at a time:

गच्छन्ति → समागच्छन्ति

gacchanti → *samāgacchanti*

they go → they come together; they convene (“go together here”)

नयन्ति → समानयन्ति

nayanti → *samānayanti*

they lead → they gather (“lead together here”)

Many Sanskrit verbs use the prefix *a-*, which usually indicates the past tense.

When we use an *upasarga*, we place it *before* this *a-*:

आ + अगच्छन् → आगच्छन्

ā + agacchan → *āgacchan*

They came.

परि + अगच्छन् → पर्यगच्छन्

pari + agacchan → *paryagacchan*

They went around.

In older Sanskrit, the *upasarga* is a more independent word and can appear almost anywhere in the sentence. But in later Sanskrit, the *upasarga* usually combines with the verb and creates a single word.

Other uses of these words

Some of these words can be used independently of any verb. Here are some common examples.

api has the sense of “also” or “even” when it follows a word:

रामो वनं गच्छति । लक्ष्मणो ऽपि वनं गच्छति ।

rāmo vanaṃ gacchati. lakṣmaṇo 'pi vanaṃ gacchati.

Rama goes to the forest. Lakshmana **also** goes to the forest.

रामो न रावणाद् अपि भीतः ।

rāmo na rāvaṇād api bhītaḥ.

Rama is not **even** afraid of Ravana.

api can also be used to ask simple yes/no questions. If it is used this way, it appears at the beginning of the sentence:

अपि त्वं सुखिनी ।

api tvaṃ sukhinī.

Are you happy?

Another common example is *prati*. It can be used with a noun in case 2 like so:

रामं प्रति

rāmaṃ prati

regarding Rama, ...

तत् प्रति

tat prati

regarding that, ...

Other prefixes

The *upasarga* is the most common type of verb prefix. But there are other verb prefixes that we can use with a verb, too. In this lesson, we will learn about some of these prefixes.

gati

There is a miscellaneous group of prefixes called *gati*. Usually, these prefixes are used only with specific roots. Here are some common *gati* prefixes:

करोति → अलंकरोति

karoti → *alaṃkaroti*

does, makes → decorates, adorns

करोति → सत्करोति

karoti → *satkaroti*

does, makes → honors, respects

करोति → नमस्करोति

karoti → *namaskaroti*

does, makes → honors, venerates

गच्छति → अन्तर्गच्छति

gacchati → *antargacchati*

goes → “goes within”; disappears

भवति → आविर्भवति

bhavati → *āvirbhavati*

becomes → becomes apparent or manifest

-sāt

In addition to the prefixes we have seen so far, we can also turn *nominals* into verb prefixes.

We can create one type of nominal prefix by adding *-sāt* to the end of the nominal stem. Usually, we use this prefix with the words *kr̥* (“do, make”) or *bhū* (“become”).

भस्म → भस्मसात्करोति

bhasma → *bhasmasātkaroti*

ash → turns (something else) to ash

भस्म → भस्मसाद्भवति

bhasma → *bhasmasādbhavati*

ash → becomes ash

cvi

There is one more type of nominal prefix worth knowing. This type is quite common:

कृष्ण → कृष्णीकरोति

kr̥ṣṇa → *kr̥ṣṇīkaroti*

black → (someone) **makes black**

कृष्ण → कृष्णीभवति

kr̥ṣṇa → *kr̥ṣṇībhavati*

black → (someone) **becomes black**

In traditional grammar, these prefixes are called **cvi**. (The word *cvi* has a complex technical meaning that is difficult to explain.)

Roughly, here is how we create a *cvi* prefix. The last *a* or *i* of the nominal stem becomes *ī*:

कृष्ण → कृष्णीकरोति

kr̥ṣṇa → *kr̥ṣṇīkaroti*

black → (someone) makes black

शुचि → शुचीकरोति

śuci → *śucīkaroti*

clear, bright → (someone) makes clear

The last *u* becomes *ū*:

पशु → पशूकरोति

paśu → *paśūkaroti*

beast, animal → (someone) makes (someone else) a beast or animal

And the last *ṛ* becomes *rī*:

मातृ → मात्रीकरोति

mātr → *mātrīkaroti*

mother → (someone) makes (someone else their) mother

ca, vā, and others

In this lesson, we will learn about many small but common uninflected words. For ease of reference, we will discuss these words in alphabetical order:

अथ एव एवम् इति इव च तु न वा विना सह स्म हि

atha eva evam iti iva ca tu na vā vinā saha sma hi

atha often marks the start of a new topic:

अथ प्रथमो ऽध्यायः

atha prathamo 'dhyāyaḥ

Now begins the first chapter.

eva emphasizes the word before it. It can be translated as “indeed” or “truly,” or sometimes as “only” or “alone”:

राम एव लक्ष्मणस्य भ्राता

rāma eva lakṣmaṇasya bhrātā

Rama truly is Lakshmana's brother.

अहम् एव बलवान्।

aham eva balavān.

I alone am strong.

evam means “thus” or “in that matter”:

स एवम् उवाच।

sa evam uvāca.

Thus did he speak.

स एवं कृत्वा गृहम् अगच्छत्।

sa evam kṛtvā grham agacchat.

He, after acting thus, went home.

iti generally marks the end of a quote or topic:

अहम् बलवान् इति बालो मन्यते

aham balavān iti bālo manyate

The boy thinks **that** he is strong. (interpretation 1)

The boy thinks, “I am strong.” (interpretation 2)

इति प्रथमोऽध्यायः

iti prathamo 'dhyāyaḥ

So ends the first chapter.

रामो गत इति शृणोति

rāmo gata iti śṛṇoti

He hears **that** Rama has left. (interpretation 1)

He hears, “Rama has left.” (interpretation 2)

iva means “like” or “as if.” It follows directly after the word it describes. In the examples below, notice how important the case endings are. By using *siṃhaḥ* in case 1, we describe the case 1 word *rāmaḥ*. By using *mṛgam* in case 2, we describe the case 2 word *rāvaṇam*:

रामः सिंह इव रावणं हन्ति ।

rāmaḥ siṃha iva rāvaṇam hanti.

Rama kills Ravana **as if** he (Rama) were a lion.

रामो मृगम् इव रावणं हन्ति ।

rāmo mṛgam iva rāvaṇam hanti.

Rama kills Ravana **as if** he (Ravana) were a deer.

रामो रावणम् सिंहो मृगम् इव हन्ति ।

rāmo rāvaṇam siṃho mṛgam iva hanti.

Rama kills Ravana **as** a lion would a deer.

ca means “and”:

रामः सीता च गच्छतः ।

rāmaḥ sītā ca gacchataḥ.

Rama **and** Sita go.

रामः सीता गजश् च गच्छन्ति ।

rāmaḥ sītā gajaś ca gacchanti.

Rama, Sita, and the elephant go.

tu means “but” or “however”:

रामो वनं गच्छति । दशरथस् तु न वनं गच्छति ।

rāmo vanam gacchati. daśarathas tu na vanam gacchati.

Rama goes to the forest. But Dasharatha does not go to the forest.

na means “not”:

रामो न गच्छति ।

rāmo na gacchati.

Rama doesn't go.

vā means “or”:

रामः सीता वा गच्छति ।

rāmaḥ sītā vā gacchati.

Rama or Sita goes.

रामः सीता गजो वा गच्छति ।

rāmaḥ sītā gajo vā gacchati.

Rama, Sita, or the elephant goes.

vinā means “without”:

रामो दशरथेन विना वनं गच्छति ।

rāmo daśarathena vinā vanam gacchati.

Rama goes to the forest without Dasharatha.

saha means “with”:

रामः सीतया सह वनं गच्छति ।

rāmaḥ sītayā saha vanam gacchati.

Rama goes to the forest with Sita.

sma often means “indeed” or “truly,” but when it follows a present tense verb, it expresses the past tense:

रामो वने निवसति स्म ।

rāmo vane nivasati sma.

Rama **lived** in the forest.

hi means “after all” or “since”:

रामो रावणं हन्ति । रामो हि रावणाद् बलवत्तरः

rāmo rāvaṇaṃ hanti. rāmo hi rāvaṇād balavattaraḥ

Rama kills Ravana. **After all**, Rama is stronger than Ravana.

Adverbs

Adverbs are uninflected words that describe how some action was done:

गजो मन्दं चरति

gajo mandam carati

The elephant walks **slowly**.

We can change any adjective into an adverb by using it in its neuter case 1 singular form:

मृदु → स मृदु भाषते ।

mṛdu → sa mṛdu bhāṣate.

soft → He speaks **softly**.

Suffixes

The suffix system

Suffixes are meaningful groups of sounds that we add to something else. Sanskrit uses many different suffixes, and these suffixes can cause many different sound changes. So it is important to understand what suffixes mean and what sound changes they cause.

We have already seen several kinds of suffixes. We have seen nominal endings:

नर + स्य → नरस्य

nara + sya → narasya
of the man

verb endings:

गच्छ + ति → गच्छति

gaccha + ti → gacchati
(someone) goes

and various other suffixes that we use with verbs:

नी + इ → नायि → नाययति

nī + i → nāyi → nāyayati
lead → make lead → makes lead

But in this topic, we'll focus on all of the *other* suffixes that Sanskrit has. We can sort these suffixes into two big groups. First are **root suffixes**, which we add to a verb root:

मन् + त्र → मन्त्र

man + tra → mantra
think + (means) → “means of thinking,” mantra, counsel

नी + त्र → नेत्र

nī + tra → netra
lead + (means) → “means of leading,” an eye

Next are **nominal suffixes**, which we usually add to a nominal stem:

मन्त्र + इन् → मन्त्रिन्

mantra + in → mantrin

mantra + (characterized by) → minister, counselor

अमर + त्व → अमरत्व

amara + tva → amaratva

immortal + (state of being) → immortality

कुरु + अ → कौरव

kuru + a → kaurava

Kuru + (descendant of) → “descendant of Kuru,” a Kaurava
(one of the main factions described in the Mahabharata)

What sound changes do suffixes cause?

As you can see in the examples above, suffixes can cause many different changes to the roots and stems they attach to.

The most common change is to *strengthen* the last vowel by making it a compound vowel. We saw an example of this with *netra* above:

नी + त्र → नेत्र

nī + tra → netra

lead + (means) → “means of leading,” an eye

But suffixes can also cause other kinds of sound changes. For example, some suffixes don't cause a vowel change at all:

नी + त → नीत

nī + ta → nīta

lead + (past suffix) → (has been) led

And others cause the letters *c* and *j* to shift to *k* and *g*:

शुच् + अ → शोक

śuc + a → śoka

grieve + (state) → grief, sorrow

त्यज् + अ → त्याग

tyaj + a → tyāga

abandon + (state) → abandoning, relinquishment

iṭ

When we add a suffix to a root, sometimes we add an extra *i* sound between the root and the suffix:

नी + त → नीत

nī + ta → nīta

lead → led

वन्द् + इ + त → वन्दित

vand + i + ta → vandita

venerate → venerated

Traditionally, this *i* sound is called ***iṭ***. Some roots use *iṭ*, some roots don't use *iṭ*, and some roots use *iṭ* optionally.

Review

1. In this topic, we will study two groups of suffixes. What are these groups called? What makes one group different from the other?

-tvā and -ya

Also known as: the gerund, the absolutive, the indeclinable or adverbial participle

We will start this topic by learning about the root suffixes -tvā and -ya. Both of these suffixes create uninflected words.

-tvā

Also known as: *ktvā*

When added to some root that means “X,” -tvā creates a word that means “after X-ing.” In other words, -tvā shows that one action happens before another.

For example, suppose we have these two simple sentences:

रामो लङ्कां गच्छति ।

rāmo laṅkāṃ gacchati.

Rama goes to Lanka.

रामो रावणं पश्यति ।

rāmo rāvaṇaṃ paśyati.

Rama sees Ravana.

We can combine them like so:

रामो लङ्कां गत्वा रावणं पश्यति

rāmo laṅkāṃ gatvā rāvaṇaṃ paśyati

Rama, **after going** to Lanka, sees Ravana.

-tvā can cause many sandhi changes. We will discuss these sandhi changes further below.

-ya

Also known as: *lyap*

-ya has the same meaning as -tvā. If the root uses a verb prefix, we always use -ya. Otherwise, we use -tvā.

For example, if we have these two simple sentences:

हनुमान् रामं प्रतिगच्छति ।

hanumān rāmaṃ pratigacchati.

Hanuman returns to Rama.

हनुमान् हृष्यति ।

hanumān hr̥ṣyati.

Hanuman rejoices.

Then we can combine them with -ya:

हनुमान् रामं प्रतिगम्य हृष्यति ।

hanumān rāmaṃ pratigamya hr̥ṣyati.

Hanuman, **after returning** to Rama, rejoices.

If the root ends in a short vowel, then we add an extra -t after the root:

आह → आहत्य

āhr̥ → āhr̥tya

fetch → after fetching

Sound changes for -tvā

Unlike many suffixes, -tvā does not strengthen the root's vowel:

नी → नीत्वा

nī → nītvā

lead → after leading

भू → भूत्वा

bhū → bhūtvā

become → after becoming

कृ → कृत्वा

kr̥ → kr̥tvā

do → after doing

As usual, some roots use the connecting *iṭ* sounds and others do not. Here are some roots that use *iṭ*:

वन्द् → वन्दित्वा

vand → *vanditvā*

venerate → after venerating

पठ् → पठित्वा

paṭh → *paṭhitvā*

read, recite → after reading or reciting

If a root ends in a consonant and does not use *it*, then the root's last consonant sound might contact the *-t* in *-tvā*. This contact causes many sandhi changes.

For example, if the root's last sound is a voiced aspirated consonant (*gh jh ḍh dh bh h*), *-tvā* usually becomes *-dhvā*:

लभ् → लब्ध

labh → *labdha*

obtain → obtained

बुध् → बुद्ध

budh → *buddha*

awake → awakened

दह् → दग्ध्वा

dah → *dagdhvā*

burn → after burning

A root's last *-c* usually becomes *-k*:

मुच् → मुक्त

muc → *mukta*

free, release → freed, released

And its last *-j* usually becomes either *-k* or *-ṣ*:

युज् → युक्त्वा

yuj → *yuktva*

yoke, join → after yoking or joining

मृज् → मृष्ट्वा

mrj → *mrṣṭvā*

wipe, polish, clean → after wiping, polishing, or cleaning

Roots that end in *-ā*, *-e*, or *-ai* often use *-i* or *-ī* for their vowels:

स्था → स्थित्वा

sthā → *sthitvā*

stand → after standing

गै → गीत्वा

gai → *gītvā*

sing → after singing

Some roots that end in *-m* or *-n* lose that sound:

गम् → गत्वा

gam → *gatvā*

go → after going

हन् → हत्वा

han → *hatvā*

kill → after killing

मन् → मत्वा

man → *matvā*

think → after thinking

For some roots, their semivowels become vowels and any other vowel sounds they have are removed. This change is called **samprasāraṇa**. Here are some examples:

वच् → उक्त्वा

vac → *uktvā*

speak → after speaking

स्वप् → सुप्त्वा

svap → *suptvā*

sleep → after sleeping

यज् → इष्ट्वा

yaj → *iṣṭvā*

sacrifice → after sacrificing

ग्रह् → गृहीत्वा

grah → *grhītvā*

grab → after grabbing

वस् → उषित्वा

vas → *uṣitvā*

live → after living

प्रच्छ् → पृष्ट्वा

prach → *prṣṭvā*

ask → after asking

And there are other irregular changes too:

दा → दत्त्वा

dā → *dattvā*

give → after giving

Review

-*tvā* and -*ya* are common suffixes that are worth knowing well.

-ta and -tavat

In this lesson, we will learn about two more common suffixes. Both of these suffixes create adjectives.

-ta

Also known as: the past passive participle, the PPP *ṭa*

The suffix **-ta** is important and powerful. When we add it to a root that means “X,” we usually create words that mean “(has) been X-ed.”

Here are some examples of **-ta**. Note that it causes the same sound changes as *tvā*:

नी → नीत

nī → *nīta*

lead → led

कृ → कृत

kr → *krta*

do, make → done, made

-ta usually creates words that express *karmanī prayoga*. In English, we would say that these words have a *passive* sense:

रामेण शरः कृतः ।

rāmeṇa śaraḥ kṛtaḥ.

By Rama, an arrow **has been made**.

But if the root implies a sense of motion, it has the normal *kartari prayoga* sense:

गम् → गत

gam → *gata*

go → (has) gone

And likewise for other roots, especially if they don't have an object:

बुध् → बुद्ध

budh → *buddha*

awaken → (has) awakened

Finally, there are some roots where *-ta* has a more general sense:

शक् → शक्त

śak → *śakta*

be able to → able, capable

-tavat

Also known as: the past active participle, *ktavatu**

The suffix ***-tavat*** has a similar meaning to *-ta*. When we add it to a root that means “X,” we usually create words that mean “has X-ed.” Here are some examples:

श्रु → श्रुतवत्

śru → *śrutavat*

hear → has heard

-tavat causes all the same sound changes that *-ta* does.

-tum

Also known as: the infinitive, *tumun*

In this lesson, we will learn about the root suffix *-tum*, which creates uninflected words.

When added to some root that means “X,” *-tum* creates a word that means “to X.” Here are some examples:

अहं खादितुम् इच्छामि ।

aham khāditum icchāmi.

I want to eat.

एतान् न हन्तुम् इच्छामि ।

etān na hantum icchāmi.

I don't want to kill them.

(Bhagavad Gita 1.34)

We almost always use *-tum* with another verb. Often, we use *-tum* words to express that someone wants to do something:

गजः खादितुम् इच्छति ।

gajaḥ khāditum icchatī.

The elephant wants to eat.

But there are many other verbs that we can use with *-tum*:

गजः खादितुं शक्नोति ।

gajaḥ khāditum śaknoti.

The elephant is able to eat.

गजः खादितुं जानाति ।

gajaḥ khāditum jānāti.

The elephant knows (how) to eat.

गजः खादितुम् आरभते ।

gajaḥ khāditum ārabhate.

The elephant begins to eat.

गजः खादितुं यतते ।

gajaḥ khāditum yatate.

The elephant **tries** to eat.

गजः खादितुम् अर्हति ।

gajaḥ khāditum arhati.

The elephant **deserves** to eat.

And in a more general way, *-tum* can show the reason that some action was done:

गजः खादितुं चरति ।

gajaḥ khāditum carati.

The elephant walks (in order) to eat.

गजः खादितुं धावति ।

gajaḥ khāditum dhāvati.

The elephant runs (in order) to eat.

Sound changes

When we add *-tum*, we strengthen the root's vowel to the medium level. As usual, some roots don't use *iṭ*:

नी → नेतुम्

nī → netum

lead → to lead

and others do:

वन्द् → वन्दितुम्

vand → vanditum

venerate → to venerate

Otherwise, *-tum* generally causes similar sound changes to *-tvā*:

बुध् → बोद्धुम्

budh → *boddhum*

awaken → to awaken

मुच् → मोक्तुम्

muc → *moktum*

free → to free

गै → गातुम्

gai → *gātum*

sing → to sing

Review

-tum is a common suffix that is worth knowing well.

-tavya, -anīya, and -ya

Also known as: the gerundive, the future passive participle, the potential participle, *kṛtyāḥ*

The suffixes *tavya*, *anīya*, and *ya* all create adjectives, and they all have the same meaning. When added to a root that means “X,” they all mean “should or must be X-ed” or “able to be X-ed.”

Here are some examples:

त्वया वनं गन्तव्यम् ।

tvayā vanaṁ gantavyam.

By you, the forest **must be gone to**. (literal translation)

You **must go** to the forest. (natural translation)

मृगो न हन्तव्यः ।

mṛgo na hantavyaḥ.

The deer **must not be killed**.

bhāve prayoga

These suffixes often express *bhāve prayoga*. When they do, they use the neuter case 1 singular:

योद्धव्यम्

yoddhavyam

There should or must be fighting.

Here is an example from the *Bhagavad Gita*:

कैर् मया सह योद्धव्यम्

kair mayā saha yoddhavyam

With whom and me **must there be fighting?** (literal translation)

With whom **must I fight?** (natural translation)

-tavya

Also known as: *tavya* or *tavyat*

To add *-tavya*, we follow the same rules as *-tum*. As usual, some roots use *iṭ* and some do not:

नी → नेतव्य

nī → *netavya*

should or must be led

वन्द् → वन्दितव्य

vand → *vanditavya*

should or must be venerated

And as usual, roots that end in consonant sounds might undergo many sandhi changes:

बुध् → बोद्धव्य

budh → *boddhavya*

युध् → योद्धव्य

yudh → *yoddhavya*

-anīya

Also known as: *anīyar*

-anīya strengthens the root's vowel to the medium level. Otherwise, it does not cause any special sound changes.

कृ → करणीय

kṛ → *karaṇīya*

do → should or must be done

दृश् → दर्शनीय

dṛś → *darśanīya*

do → should or must be seen

-ya

Also known as: *yat*, *nyat*, *kyap*, ...

-ya causes various sound changes. Here are some examples:

गै → गेयम्

gai → *geyam*

sing → should or must be sung

पा → पेयम्

pā → *peyam*

drink → should or must be drunk

लभ् → लभ्य

labh → *labhya*

obtain → should or must be obtained

शक् → शक्य

śak → *śakya*

be able to → able to be done, possible

सह् → सह्य

sah → *sahya*

endure → endurable

कृ → कार्य

kr → *kārya*

do → should or must be done

-at, -āna, and -vas

This lesson depends on content from *Nominals 1*, *Verbs 1*, and *Verbs 2*.

The three suffixes *-at*, *-āna*, and *-vas* all create nominal stems. We attach these suffixes to verb *stems* instead of verb *roots*. Here are some examples of how these suffixes attach to stems of the root *kṛ*:

कुरु + अत् → कुर्वत्

kuru + at → kurvat

do → while doing (*parasmaipada*)

कुरु + आन → कुर्वाण

kuru + āna → kurvāṇa

do → while doing (*ātmanepada*)

करिष्य + अत् → करिष्यत्

kariṣya + at → kariṣyat

do → about to do

चकृ + वस् → चकृवस्

cakṛ + vas → cakṛvas

do → has done

-at

Also known as: the present or future active participle, *śatr*

The meaning of *-at* depends on the stem we attach it to. If we attach it to a present tense stem, we get a word that means “while doing X”:

गच्छ → गच्छत्

gaccha → gacchat

while going

कुरु → कुर्वत्

kuru → *kurvat*

while doing

If we attach it to a simple future tense stem, we get a word that usually means “about to do X”:

गमिष्य → गमिष्यत्

gamiṣya → *gamiṣyat*

will go → about to go

करिष्य → करिष्यत्

kariṣya → *kariṣyat*

will do → about to do

We can use *-at* only with roots that use *parasmaipada* endings.

Generally, nominal stems that end in *-at* use two stems: a **strong stem** that ends in *-ant* and a **weak stem** that ends in *-at*. Certain endings use the strong stem:

अहं चरन्तं नरं पश्यामि

aham carantaṁ naraṁ paśyāmi

I see the man **who is walking**.

(strong stem)

And others use the weak stem:

अहं चरता नरेण सह वदामि ।

aham caratā nareṇa saha vadāmi.

I speak with the man **who is walking**.

(weak stem)

However, roots from the *hu* class use *-at* as their only stem:

जुहु → जुह्वत्

juhu → *juhvat*

while offering

-āna

Also known as: the present or future middle participle, *śānac*

-āna has the same meaning and usage as **-at**. The difference is that we use **-āna** with roots that use *ātmanepada* endings:

कुरु → कुर्वाण

kuru → *kurvāṇa*

while doing (*ātmanepada*)

Stems that end with **-a** use **-māna** instead:

नय → नयमान

naya → *nayamāna*

lead → while leading

नेष्य → नेष्यमान

neṣya → *neṣyamāna*

will lead → about to lead

करिष्य → करिष्यमान

kariṣya → *kariṣyamāna*

will do → about to do

-vas

Also known as: the perfect active participle, *kvasu*^{*}

vas is a rare suffix that we use only with the stem of the distant past tense. Usually, it creates stems that mean “has done X”:

चकृ → चकृवस्

cakṛ → *cakṛvas*

did → did or has done

We can use **-vas** only if the root can use *parasmaipada* endings:

जग्म् → जग्मिवस्

jagm → *jagmivas*

went → went or has gone

तस्थ् → तस्थिवस्

tasth → *tasthivas*

stood → stood or has stood

Otherwise, we use *-āna*:

चकृ → चक्राण

cakṛ → *cakrāṇa*

did → did or has done (*ātmanepada*)

Review

The *-at* and *-āna* endings are common and worth knowing well. For details, see our *Sentences* topic.

Other root suffixes

In this lesson, we will learn about some other common root suffixes. For ease of reference, we will discuss these suffixes in alphabetical order:

अ अक अन इन् तृ त्र

a aka ana in tṛ tra

-a

Also known as: *ghañ*

-a creates abstract nouns that use masculine endings. When we add **-a** to a root that means “X,” we get words that mean “the state of X-ing”:

भू → भाव

bhū → bhāva

be, become → the state of being or becoming; existence

मृ → मार

mṛ → mārā

die → death

आनन्द → आनन्द

ānand → ānanda

feel blissful → bliss

In this sense, **-a** often causes a root's final *c* and *j* sounds to become *k* and *g*:

युज् → योग

yuj → yoga

शुच् → शोक

śuc → śoka

grieve → grief, sorrow

त्यज् → त्याग

tyaj → tyāga

abandon → abandonment, relinquishment

-akaAlso known as: *ṇvul*

aka (feminine *ikā*) creates adjectives. When we add *-aka* to a root that means “X,” we get words that mean “one who does X”:

कृ → कारक

kr̥ → *kāraka*

do → doer

पच् → पाचक

pac → *pācaka*

cook → cooker

-anaAlso known as: *lyuṭ*, *lyu*

-ana usually creates abstract neuter nouns. When we add *-ana* to a root that means “X,” we get words that mean “the act of doing X”:

कृ → करण

kr̥ → *karaṇa*

do → act of doing; action

इ → अयन

i → *ayana*

go → act of going; journey

मृ → मरण

mṛ → *marāṇa*

die → act of dying; death

-ana also creates adjectives (feminine *-anī*) that mean “one who does X”:

कृ → करण

kr̥ → *karaṇa*

do → one that does or causes; the mean of an action

मृद् → मर्दन

mṛd → *mardana*

crush → one who crushes or pulverizes

-in

-in (feminine *-inī*) creates adjectives that mean “one who does X”:

कृ → कारिन्

kr → *kārin*

do → doing

-tr

Also known as: *tr̥c*

-tr (feminine *-trī*) creates adjectives that mean “one who does X”:

कृ → कर्तृ

kr → *kartṛ*

do → doer, agent

नी → नेतृ

nī → *netṛ*

lead → leader

युध् → योद्धृ

yudh → *yoddhṛ*

fight → fighter

The case 7 singular of *kartṛ* is *kartari*. We have seen this word in the phrase *kartari prayoga* (“usage in (the sense of) agent”).

-tra

Also known as: *ṣṭran*

-tra usually creates neuter nouns with the sense of “the means of doing X”:

नी → नेत्र

nī → *netra*

lead → by which one is led; an eye

मन् → मन्त्र

man → *mantra*

think → by which thought occurs; a mantra

Nominal suffixes

In this lesson, we will learn about some common nominal suffixes. For ease of reference, we will discuss these suffixes in alphabetical order:

Unless we mention otherwise, none of these suffixes cause any sound changes.

अ इन् क तम तर तस् ता त्व मत् मय य वत्

a in ka tama tara tas tā tva mat maya ya vat

-a

Also known as: *aṇ*

-a often creates adjectives that mean “descending from X” or “of X.” Usually, we strengthen the stem's first vowel to the strongest level. And if the stem ends in -a, we remove the last -a:

कुरु + अ → कौरव

kuru + a → kaurava

descending from Kuru; a Kaurava

इन्द्र + अ → ऐन्द्र

indra + a → aindra

of Indra

-in

Also known as: *inī*

-in (feminine: -inī) creates adjectives that mean “characterized by X.” If the stem ends in -a, we remove the last -a.

योग + इन् → योगिन्

yoga + in → yogin

yoga → characterized by yoga; a yogi

योग + इनी → योगिनी

yoga + inī → yoginī

yoga → a female yogi; a yogini

-ka

-ka often creates stems that mean “a little X” or “a dear X”:

पुत्र + क → पुत्रक

putra + ka → putraka

son → little son, dear son

-tama

Also known as: *tamap, gha*

-tama (feminine: *-tamā*) creates adjectives that mean “most X”:

बलवत् + तम → बलवत्तम

balavat + tama → balavattama

strong → strongest

-tara

Also known as: *tarap, gha*

-tara (feminine: *-tarā*) creates adjectives that mean “more X”:

सुन्दर + तर → सुन्दरतर

sundara + tara → sundaratara

beautiful → more beautiful

-tas

Also known as: *tasĩ*

-tas creates an uninflected word that means “from X.” Due to sandhi, it becomes *-taḥ*:

अग्नि → अग्नितः

agni → agnitaḥ

fire → from the fire

-tā

Also known as: *tal*

-tā creates feminine nouns that mean “X-ness” or “the state of being X”:

योग्य + ता → योग्यता

yogya + tā → yogyatā

useful, appropriate → utility, propriety

-tva

-tva has the same meaning as *tā*, but it creates neuter stems:

अमर + त्व → अमरत्व

amara + tva → amaratva

immortal → immortality

सम + त्व → समत्व

sama + tva → samatva

same, even → sameness, evenness, equanimity

-mat

Also known as: *matuṣ*

-mat (feminine: *-matī*) creates adjectives that mean “possessing X” or “characterized by X.” Certain stems use *-vat* instead. See our notes on *-vat* for details.

हनु + मत् → हनुमत्

hanu + mat → hanumat

jaw → characterized by (prominent) jaws; Hanuman

-maya

Also known as: *mayat*

-maya (feminine: *-mayī*) creates adjectives that mean “made of X”:

हिरण्य + मय → हिरण्यमय

hiraṇya + maya → hiraṇyamaya

gold → made of gold, golden

-ya

-ya creates neuter nouns with an abstract sense. Usually, we strengthen the stem's first vowel to the strongest level:

सदृश → सादृश्य

sadrśa → *sādrśya*

similar (to) → similarity

-vat

Also known as: *vatup*

-vat (feminine: *-vatī*) has the same meaning as *-mat*. We use *-vat* if the stem ends in *m* or *a*, or if it has *m* or *a* as its next-to-last letter:

भग + वत् → भगवत्

bhaga + *vat* → *bhagavat*

(*a* is the last letter)

लक्ष्मी + वत् → लक्ष्मीवत्

lakṣmī + *vat* → *lakṣmīvāt*

(*m* is the next-to-last letter)

Review

Sanskrit has many more nominal suffixes. But these are the most common.

Compounds

The compound system

Compounds (*samāsa*) are combinations of multiple words. Usually, we combine two words at a time:

रामस्य माता → राममाता

rāmasya mātā → rāmamātā

Rama's mother

We can even combine compounds with other words to make new compounds:

राममातुर् गृहम् → राममातृगृहम्

rāmamātur gṛham → rāmamātrgṛham

Rama's mother's house

And we can repeat this process again and again. Some styles of Sanskrit literature use *very* long compounds.

Compared to using separate words, compounds are ambiguous and lose information:

गजस्य फलम् → गजफलम्

gajasya phalam → gajaphalam

The elephant's fruit → elephant fruit

गजानां फलम् → गजफलम्

gajānām phalam → gajaphalam

The elephants' fruit → elephant fruit

But although compounds lose information, compounds are compact and short. If the context is clear, they save a lot of time. And if a sentence is very complex, compounds can even make the sentence clearer and easier to follow.

For this reason, compounds are common in Sanskrit, especially in later compositions.

Four types of compounds

Sanskrit compounds have four basic types. Each of the next four lessons will examine one of these types in more detail.

First is the **dvandva**, which we saw in our series of core lessons. Any set of words that could be combined with the word “and” can be combined into a *dvandva*:

रामः सीता च → रामसीते

rāmaḥ sītā ca → rāmasīte

Rama and Sita

रामः सीता लक्ष्मणः च → रामसीतालक्ष्मणाः

rāmaḥ sītā lakṣmaṇaḥ ca → rāmasītālakṣmaṇāḥ

Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana

Second is the **tatpuruṣa**, which we also saw in our series of core lessons. The idea is that the first word modifies the second in some way, just as a chessboard is a type of board (and not a type of chess):

रामस्य माता → राममाता

rāmasya mātā → rāmamātā

Rama's mother

रामस्य पुत्रः → रामपुत्रः

rāmasya putraḥ → rāmaputraḥ

Rama's son

Third is the **bahuvrīhi**. This is similar to English examples like “graybeard” (a person whose beard is gray) and “blockhead” (a person with a block-like head). The idea is that both words, together, describe someone who is not explicitly mentioned in the compound:

महान् रथः यस्य → महारथः

mahān rathaḥ yasya → mahārathaḥ

whose chariot is great → “great-charioted,” a great warrior

स्थिता प्रज्ञा यस्य → स्थितप्रज्ञः

sthitā prajñā yasya → *sthitaprajñāḥ*

whose discernment is stable → “stable-discernmented”

Fourth is the *avyayībhāva*. This creates uninflected words. Usually, the first word is itself an uninflected word:

उप + कृष्ण → उपकृष्णम्

upa + *kṛṣṇa* → *upakṛṣṇam*

near + Krishna → near Krishna

यथा + उक्त → यथोक्तम्

yathā + *ukta* → *yathoktam*

according to + said → as it was said

How to tell compounds apart

Each of the compounds above has exactly two words. So how can we tell them apart? As you read more Sanskrit, you will be able to do so instinctively. But until then, here are some basic tips.

The words in a *dvandva* compounds are usually all of the same “type”: all people, all animals, all kinds of weapons, and the like:

रामः सीता लक्ष्मणः च → रामसीतालक्ष्मणाः

rāmaḥ sītā lakṣmaṇaḥ ca → *rāmasītālakṣmaṇāḥ*

Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana (all people)

The first word of an *avyayībhāva* is usually an uninflected word:

यथाशक्ति

yathāśakti

According to one's power

The *bahuvrīhi* and the *tatpuruṣa* are sometimes difficult to tell apart. But a *bahuvrīhi* is an adjective. For example, a *bahuvrīhi* might describe a *masculine* noun, but its second word might come from a *feminine* noun. This happens in the example below:

स्थिता प्रज्ञा यस्य → स्थितप्रज्ञः

sthitā prajñā yasya → sthitaprajñah

whose discernment is stable → “stable-discernmented”

When you see this mismatch, then you know that the compound is a *bahuvrīhi*.

Otherwise, notice what other words the compound *agrees* with — that is, what other words it matches in gender, case, and number. For example, consider the compound in the sentence below:

दृढ-व्रतो रामो गच्छति ।

dr̥ḍha-vrato rāmo gacchati.

Firm-vow Rama goes.

Here, the compound *dr̥ḍha-vrataḥ* has two interpretations:

- Rama, who is a firm vow, goes. (*tatpuruṣa*)
- Rama, who is firm-vowed, goes. (*bahuvrīhi*)

But only the *bahuvrīhi* option makes sense here.

The *bahuvrīhi* in older Sanskrit

In older Sanskrit, the *bahuvrīhi* and the *tatpuruṣa* have different accent patterns, so they are much easier to tell apart. Sadly, these accent patterns are not made clear in later Sanskrit.

The *dvandva*

Also known as: the coordinative compound

dvandva literally means “pair.” Any set of words that could be combined with the word *ca* (“and”) can be combined into a *dvandva*:

रामः सीता च → रामसीते

rāmaḥ sītā ca → *rāmasīte*

Rama and Sita

रामः सीता लक्ष्मणः च → रामसीतालक्ष्मणाः

rāmaḥ sītā lakṣmaṇaḥ ca → *rāmasītālakṣmaṇāḥ*

Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana

In the examples above, notice that the compound's *number* matches the combined numbers of its items. Thus *rāma-sīte* is in the dual and *rāma-sītā-lakṣmaṇāḥ* is in the plural.

Also, notice that the compound uses the gender of its last item. Thus *rāma-sīte* uses a feminine ending and *rāma-sītā-lakṣmaṇāḥ* uses a masculine ending.

Two types of *dvandva*

The *dvandva* is a simple compound, but it has some small subtleties that are worth knowing. In particular, it has two main subtypes.

The first is the type we saw above, where several different items are listed together. This is called the *itaretara-dvandva* (“one-and-another *dvandva*”):

रामः सीता लक्ष्मणः च → रामसीतालक्ष्मणाः

rāmaḥ sītā lakṣmaṇaḥ ca → *rāmasītālakṣmaṇāḥ*

Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana

फलानि पुष्पाणि च → फलपुष्पाणि

phalāni puṣpāṇi ca → *phalapuṣpāṇi*

fruits and flowers

But if all of the members imply some more complete collection of concepts, we have a second type called *samāhāra-dvandva* (“collection *dvandva*”). The *samāhāra-dvandva* is always in the neuter singular:

आहार-निद्रा-भयम्

āhāra-nidrā-bhayam

food, sleep, and fear

पाणि-पादम्

pāṇi-pādam

hands and feet

Here, the compound *āhāranidrābhayam* refers not just to food, sleep, and fear, but to all of the characteristics of animal life more broadly. Likewise, the compound *pāṇipādam* refers not just to hands and feet but to all the limbs of the body.

Other small changes

For a few *dvandvas*, the individual words might undergo some small changes. Here are some common examples:

माता पिता च → मातापितरौ

mātā pitā ca → *mātāpitarau*

mother and father

मित्रो वरुणः च → मित्रावरुणौ

mitro varuṇaḥ ca → *mitrāvaruṇau*

Mitra and Varuna (names of Vedic gods)

द्यौः पृथिवी च → द्यावापृथिवी

dyauḥ pṛthivī ca → *dyāvāpṛthivī*

heaven and earth

Review

The *dvandva* is a simple compound and easy to understand.

1. What is the difference in meaning between an *itaretara-dvandva* and a *samāhāra-dvandva*?
2. What gender and number does an *itaretara-dvandva* use?
3. What gender and number does a *samāhāra-dvandva* use?

The *tatpuruṣa*

Also known as: the determinative compound

tatpuruṣa literally means “his man” or “his servant.” In a *tatpuruṣa* compound, the second word is the main idea and the first word describes it in some way:

धर्मस्य क्षेत्रम् → धर्मक्षेत्रम्

dharmaśya kṣetram → *dharma-kṣetram*

field of dharma → dharma field

कुरूणां क्षेत्रम् → कुरुक्षेत्रम्

kurūṇāṃ kṣetram → *kurukṣetram*

field of the Kuru people → Kuru field

Why do we describe this compound with a strange word like *tatpuruṣa*? Part of the reason is that the word “*tatpuruṣa*” is itself a *tatpuruṣa* compound:

तस्य पुरुषः → तत्पुरुष

tasya puruṣaḥ → *tatpuruṣa*

his man

The *tatpuruṣa* is common and has many different varieties. So it is worth knowing well.

Common *tatpuruṣa*

In the most common type of *tatpuruṣa*, the first word describes the second in some way:

नगरं गतः → नगरगतः

nagaraṃ gataḥ → *nagaragataḥ*

gone to the city → city-gone

(case 2)

नखैर् भिन्नः → नखभिन्नः

nakhair bhinnah → *nakhabhinnah*

torn by (one's) nails → nail-torn

(case 3)

गवे हितम् → गोहितम्

gave hitam → gohitam

good for a cow → cow-good

(case 4)

चौरात् भयम् → चौरभयम्

caurāt bhayam → caurabhayam

fear of a thief → thief fear

(case 5)

राज्ञः पुत्रः → राजपुत्रः

rājñāḥ putraḥ → rājaputraḥ

son of a king, prince → king son

(case 6)

आतपे शुष्कः → आतपशुष्कः

ātape śuṣkaḥ → ātapaśuṣkaḥ

dried in the heat → heat dried

(case 7)

Of these, the most common is the case 6 *tatpuruṣa*. In other cases, there are some restrictions on which words we are allowed to use.

karmadhāraya

If both words in the *tatpuruṣa* refer to the same idea, we get a special type of *tatpuruṣa* called ***karmadhāraya***:

कृष्णः सर्पः → कृष्णसर्पः

kṛṣṇaḥ sarpaḥ → kṛṣṇasarpaḥ

black snake

मेघ इव श्यामः → मेघश्यामः

megha iva śyāmaḥ → meghaśyāmaḥ

cloud dark (as dark as a cloud)

शुक्लः कृष्णः → शुक्लकृष्णः

śuklaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ → śuklakṛṣṇaḥ

(something that is) white and black

Compounds with *na*

One type of *tatpuruṣa* uses the word *na* as its first word. This *na* becomes *a* in front of consonants and *an* in front of vowels:

न भावः → अभावः

na bhāvaḥ → abhāvaḥ

not existence → absence

upapada compounds

The word *upapada* has various meanings. In the context of compounds, an *upapada* is a word that we can create only when making a compound. Here is a classic example:

कुम्भं करोति → कुम्भकारः

*kumbhaṃ karoti → kumbha***kāraḥ**

someone who makes pots → pot-**maker**

The word *kāra* that you see here generally exists only as part of a compound.

Here are a few more examples of *upapada* compounds:

जलं धीयते अस्मिन् → जलधिः

*jalaṃ dhīyate asmin → jala***dhiḥ**

water is borne in this → water-**bearing**, ocean

जलं मुञ्चति → जलमुक्

*jalaṃ muñcati → jala***muk**

it releases water → water-**releasing**, cloud

The *bahuvrīhi*

Also known as: the possessive compound

bahuvrīhi literally means “(having) much rice.” In a *bahuvrīhi* compound, the two compounded words describe an idea that is not explicitly mentioned. Usually, the first word describes the second:

महान् रथो यस्य → महारथः

mahān ratho yasya → *mahārathaḥ*

who has a great chariot → “great-charioted,” a great warrior

पीतो ऽम्बरो यस्य → पीताम्बरः

pīto 'mbaro yasya → *pītāmbaraḥ*

who has yellow clothes → yellow-clothed

दृढा व्रता यस्य → दृधव्रतः

dṛḍhā vratā yasya → *dṛdhavrataḥ*

who holds firm vows → firm-vowed

Or sometimes, the relationship is more complex:

चक्रं पाणौ यस्य → चक्रपाणिः

cakraṃ pāṇau yasya → *cakrapāṇiḥ*

in whose hand is a discus → discus-handed

We have many examples of this compound in English: flatfoot, lowlife, yellow-belly, blockhead, kindhearted, evil-minded, and so on.

Why do we describe this compound with a strange word like *bahuvrīhi*? Part of the reason is that the word “*bahuvrīhi*” is itself a *bahuvrīhi* compound:

बहुर् व्रीहिर् यस्य → बहुव्रीहि

bahur vrīhir yasya → *bahuvrīhi*

who has much rice → “much-riced,” a wealthy person

Using the *bahuvrīhi*

The *bahuvrīhi* is an adjective, regardless of the genders used by its individual words. For example, consider the example below:

स्थिता प्रज्ञा यस्य → स्थितप्रज्ञः

sthitā prajñā yasya → *sthitaprajñah*

whose discernment is stable → “stable-discernmented”

prajñā is a feminine word, but *sthitaprajñā* is an adjective that can be used with masculine words.

Ambiguous compounds

The *bahuvrīhi* often strongly resembles a *tatpuruṣa*:

दृढव्रतः

ḍṛḍhavrataḥ

firm vow (*tatpuruṣa* interpretation)

whose vows are firm (*bahuvrīhi* interpretation)

In older Sanskrit, *bahuvrīhi* and *tatpuruṣa* compounds usually have different accents. But in later Sanskrit, we must rely on context to tell these compounds apart.

Review

This lesson reminds us of a charming verse:

अहं च त्वं च राजेन्द्र लोकनाथाव् उभावपि ।

ahaṃ ca tvaṃ ca rājendra lokanāthāv ubhāvapi ।

Both I and you, O lord of men, are *loka-nāthas* (world-lords).

बहुव्रीहिरहं राजन् षष्ठीतत्पुरुषो भवान् ॥

bahuvrīhirahaṃ rājan ṣaṣṭhītatpuruṣo bhavān ॥

I am a *bahuvrīhi*, my king, and you are a case 6 *tatpuruṣa*.

The speaker, due to his poverty, is someone whom the entire world dominates (*loko nātho yasya*), and the king is an ordinary lord of the earth (*lokasya nāthaḥ*).

The *avyayībhāva*

avyayībhāva literally means “uninflected state.” Usually, the first word of an *avyayībhāva* is an uninflected word and the second word extends or clarifies the first one:

यथा + शक्ति → यथाशक्ति

yathā + *śakti* → *yathāśakti*

according to + power → according to one's power

प्रति + पदम् → प्रतिपदम्

prati + *padam* → *pratipadam*

against, regarding → at every word, for each word

यावत् + जीवम् → यावज्जीवम्

yāvat + *jīvam* → *yāvajjīvam*

as much as + life → throughout one's life

Sentences

Sentence structure

Sentences are meaningful expressions made from one or more words. Just as sounds combine to express a meaningful word, words combine to create a meaningful sentence.

The lessons in this topic will focus on how words interact to create meaning.

A basic sentence

The most basic Sanskrit sentence is a single verb:

गच्छति ।

gacchati.

(Someone) goes.

We can add other words to this basic sentence to extend or modify its basic meaning. For example, we can express who is performing the act of “going” by adding a nominal word:

रामो गच्छति ।

rāmo gacchati.

Rama goes.

We can also specify the destination of the action:

रामो वनं गच्छति ।

rāmo vanam gacchati.

Rama goes to the forest.

Or various other kinds of information:

रामो सीतया सह वनम् अयोध्यायाः पित्रे गच्छति ।

rāmo sītayā saha vanam ayodhyāyāḥ pitre gacchati.

Rama goes with Sita to the forest from Ayodhya for his father.

As we add more and more nominal words, we add more and more detail to our original action.

Sentence context

In Sanskrit, we often leave words out of the sentence if the context is clear. Here are some simple examples:

रामो मातरं गच्छति ।

rāmo mātaraṃ gacchati.

Rama goes to **his** mother.

रामो हस्तं पश्यति ।

rāmo hastaṃ paśyati.

Rama looks at **his** hand.

If it is clear from context that *rāma* is the subject, we can even say this:

मातरं गच्छति ।

mātaraṃ gacchati.

He goes to **his** mother.

हस्तं पश्यति ।

hastaṃ paśyati.

He looks at **his** hand.

Verbless sentences

If we use a verb like *asti* (“is”), we can express that one thing is another:

रामो राजपुत्रो ऽस्ति ।

rāmo rājaputro 'sti.

Rama **is a** prince.

रामो बलवान् अस्ति ।

rāmo balavān asti.

Rama **is** strong.

If the sentence has no verb, the verb *asti* is assumed by default. So we can also rephrase the two examples above to remove *asti*:

रामो राजपुत्रः ।

rāmo rājaputraḥ.

Rama **is** a prince.

रामो बलवान् ।

rāmo balavān.

Rama **is** strong.

Sentences without a verb are sometimes called **verbless** sentences. We will learn more about these in a future lesson.

Agreement

In a sentence, multiple words might refer to the same idea. For example, consider these simple sentences:

रामः पृच्छति ।

rāmaḥ pr̥cchati.

Rama asks.

रामो योधः ।

rāmo yodhaḥ.

Rama is a warrior.

In the first sentence, *rāmaḥ* shows who performs the action, and *pr̥cchati* shows the action this performer does. In the second sentence, *rāmaḥ* shows who is being described, and *yodhaḥ* describes *rāmaḥ*.

When two words refer to the same concept, they must use the same gender, case, number, and person. For example, the sentences below are all incorrect because their words don't match:

*रामः पृच्छन्ति ।

**rāmaḥ pr̥cchanti.*

(Number doesn't match.)

*रामः पृच्छामि ।

**rāmaḥ pr̥cchāmi.*

(Person doesn't match.)

*रामो योधम् ।

**rāmo yodham.*

(Gender doesn't match.)

*रामो योधेन ।

**rāmo yodhena.*

(Case doesn't match.)

This matching is called **agreement**. In this lesson, we will study agreement in more detail.

Agreement of two nominals

Two nominals that refer to the same idea must have the same gender, case, and number:

कृष्णः सर्पः

kr̥ṣṇaḥ sarpah

black snake

कृष्णौ सर्पौ

kr̥ṣṇau sarpau

two black snakes

कृष्णाः सर्पाः

kr̥ṣṇāḥ sarpāḥ

many black snakes

कृष्णाय सर्पाय

kr̥ṣṇāya sarpāya

for the black snake

कृष्णा सर्पी

kr̥ṣṇā sarpī

(female) black snake

In each example above, one word is the subject (*sarpah*) and the other word describes it (*kr̥ṣṇaḥ*). The genders, cases, and numbers of these words completely match.

If the sentence uses a word like *ca* (“and”) to connect multiple nominals, the describing word should match the number of all of its described words together:

रामो योधः ।

rāmo yodhaḥ.

Rama is a warrior.

(singular number)

रामो लक्ष्मणश् च योधौ ।

rāmo lakṣmaṇaś ca yodhau.

Rama and Lakshmana are warriors.

(dual number)

रामो लक्ष्मणो भरतश् च योधाः ।

rāmo lakṣmaṇo bharataś ca yodhāḥ.

Rama, Lakshmana, and Bharata are warriors.

(plural number)

But if the sentence uses a word like *vā* (“or”), the describing word usually matches the number of the last word:

रामः सत्यवान् ।

rāmaḥ satyavān.

Rama is truthful.

रामो लक्ष्मणो वा सत्यवान् ।

rāmo lakṣmaṇo vā satyavān.

Rama or Lakshmana is truthful.

(masculine case 1 singular to match *lakṣmaṇa*)

रामो लक्ष्मणः सीता वा सत्यवती ।

rāmo lakṣmaṇaḥ sītā vā satyavatī.

Rama, Lakshmana, or Sita is truthful.

(feminine case 1 singular to match *sītā*)

Agreement of nominal and verb

The case 1 nominal and the verb must use the same person:

अहं चरामि

ahaṃ carāmi

I walk.

अहं चर्ये।

ahaṃ carye.

I am walked (to).

त्वं चरसि

tvam carasi

You walk.

त्वं चर्यसे।

tvam caryase.

You are walked (to).

They must also use the same number:

गजश् चरति

gajaś carati

The elephant walks.

गजौ चरतः

gajau carataḥ

The two elephants walk.

गजाश् चरन्ति

gajāś caranti

The elephants walk.

This is true even in *karmaṇi prayoga*:

नरेण गजश् चर्यते

nareṇa gajaś caryate

The elephant is walked to by the man.

नरेण गजौ चर्येते

nareṇa gajau caryete

The two elephants are walked to by the man.

नरेण गजाश् चर्यन्ते

nareṇa gajāś caryante

The elephants are walked to by the man.

If *ca* or *vā* is used, we follow rules similar to those described above:

रामो गजश् च चरतः ।

rāmo gajāś ca carataḥ.

Rama and the elephant **walk**.

रामो गजो वा चरति ।

rāmo gajo vā carati.

Either Rama or the elephant **walks**.

Verbless sentences

If a sentence has no verb, we assume the verb *asti* by default. So, the two sentences below have essentially the same meaning:

रामो राजपुत्रो ऽस्ति ।

rāmo rājaputro 'sti.

Rama is a prince.

रामो राजपुत्रः ।

rāmo rājaputraḥ.

Rama (is) a prince.

Roughly, there are three types of verbless sentences. In this lesson, we will learn about these three types.

Two nominals in case 1

The most common verbless sentence has two nominals in case 1. We use this type of sentence to express that one item *is* another:

रामो राजपुत्रः ।

rāmo rājaputraḥ.

Rama (is) a prince.

रामो बलवान् ।

rāmo balavān.

Rama is strong.

Having or owning

We also commonly see sentences where one noun is in case 6. We use this type to show that one noun *owns* or *has* another:

दशरथस्य पुत्रः ।

daśarathasya putraḥ.

Dasharatha has a son.

दशरथस्य बलम् ।

daśarathasya balam.

Dasharatha has strength.

दशरथस्य नगरम् ।

daśarathasya nagaram.

Dasharatha has a city.

दशरथस्य सुखम् ।

daśarathasya sukham.

Dasharatha has happiness.

(Less literally, “Dasharatha is happy.”)

Other sentences

We can create other verbless sentences by using special uninflected words. Here is a small example:

अलम् एतेन ।

alam etena.

Enough of this.

Questions

In this lesson, we will learn about the different ways we can ask questions in Sanskrit.

kim

The most straightforward way we can ask a question is to use the pronoun *kim*. *kim* means “who?” or “what?” and its specific meaning is usually clear from context. We can use *kim* to precisely ask about different parts of a sentence.

For example, suppose someone says the following:

राहुलो कौतूहलाद् वानराय फलं ददाति ।

rāhulo kautūhalād vānarāya phalaṃ dadāti.

Rahula gives the monkey a fruit out of curiosity (“from curiosity”).

We can use *kim* to ask a question like this:

को वानराय फलम् ददाति ।

ko vānarāya phalam dadāti.

Who gives a fruit to the monkey?

Usually, someone would answer like this:

राहुलः ।

rāhulaḥ.

Rahula.

Likewise, we can ask other questions and give other answers:

राहुलः कस्मै फलं ददाति ।

rāhulaḥ kasmai phalaṃ dadāti.

To whom does Rahula give a fruit?

वानराय ।

vānarāya.

To the monkey.

राहुलो वानराय किं ददाति?

rāhulo vānarāya kiṃ dadāti?

What does Rahula give the monkey?

फलम्।

phalam.

A fruit.

राहुलः कस्माद् वानराय फलं ददाति।

rāhulaḥ kasmād vānarāya phalaṃ dadāti.

From what (cause) does Rahula give a fruit to the monkey?

कौतूहलात्।

kautūhalāt.

From curiosity.

In many styles of Sanskrit, the word *kim* can also mean “why.” This usage is very common in the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*:

किं मां हन्तुम् इच्छसि।

kiṃ māṃ hantum icchasi.

Why do you want to kill me?

To learn more about the specific endings that the *kim* pronoun uses, see our [lesson on *kim* and *yad*](#).

Yes-no questions

Yes-no questions are questions whose answers are usually “yes” or “no.”

In Sanskrit, we can ask yes-no questions in many different ways. One common way is to put the word **api** at the beginning of the sentence:

अपि त्वं सुखी।

api tvam sukhī.

Are you happy?

Another style is to put the word *kim* at the beginning or end of the sentence. If you know Hindi, this is similar to how we use the Hindi word क्या:

किं त्वं सुखी।

kim tvaṃ sukhī.

Are you happy?

त्वं सुखी किम्।

tvaṃ sukhī kim.

Are you happy?

Note that *kim* could indicate either a yes-no question or a “why?” question. The specific meaning depending on the context and style. In newer styles of Sanskrit, it usually indicates a yes-no question.

One other style is to use the word *kaccit*. When we use this word, we hope or expect that the answer is “yes”:

कच्चित् त्वं सुखी।

kaccit tvaṃ sukhī.

Are you happy? (I hope you are.)

We can answer these questions in a few different ways. Usually, we repeat part of the question:

अहं सुखी।

ahaṃ sukhī.

I am happy.

अहं न सुखी।

ahaṃ na sukhī.

I am not happy.

Or in informal settings, we can use the words *ām* (“yes”) or *na* (“no”):

आम्, अहं सुखी ।

ām, ahaṃ sukhī.

Yes, I am happy.

kutra, kadā, and others

There are various other words that we can use to ask questions. Here are some common uninflected words:

Word	Meaning
कथम् <i>katham</i>	in what way? how?
कदा <i>kadā</i>	when?
किमर्थम् <i>kimartham</i>	for what reason? why?
कुतः <i>kutaḥ</i>	from what? for what reason?
कुत्र <i>kutra</i>	where?
क्व <i>kva</i>	where?

Note that *kutra* and *kva* have the same meaning. *kutra* is more common in older Sanskrit.

Finally, here are some common adjectives:

Word	Meaning
कियत् <i>kiyat</i>	how much?
कीदृश <i>kīdrśa</i>	of what kind?

Relative phrases

Relative phrases are phrases like this:

अहम् अपश्यं नरं यो गजम् अचोरयत् ।

aham apaśyaṃ naraṃ yo gajam acorayat.

I saw the man **who stole the elephant**.

स नरो गच्छति यत्र बहवो गजा वसन्ति ।

sa naro gacchati yatra bahavo gajā vasanti.

That man is going **where many elephants live**.

गजा भीता भवन्ति यदा चोरम् पश्यन्ति ।

gajā bhītā bhavanti yadā coram paśyanti.

Elephants become scared **when they see the thief**.

Relative phrases are one way we can create complex Sanskrit sentences. In this lesson, we will learn about many different kinds of relative phrases.

yad

The most straightforward way we can make a relative phrase is to use the pronoun **yad**. We can use it to precisely describe different parts of a sentence. For example, suppose someone says the following:

राहुलो नगरं चरति ।

rāhulo nagaraṃ carati.

Rahula walks to the city.

We can make phrase like this:

राहुलो यो ग्रामे वसति नगरं चरति ।

rāhulo yo grāme vasati nagaraṃ carati.

Rahula, **who lives in the village**, walks to the city.

The pronoun **yad** uses the same gender and number as the word it describes. But it can use different cases:

राहुलो यम् माता मार्गति नगरं चरति ।

rāhulo yam mātā mārgati nagaram carati.

Rahula, **whom his mother is searching for**, walks to the city.

राहुलो यस्य पिता योधो नगरं चरति ।

rāhulo yasya pitā yodho nagaram carati.

Rahula, **whose father is a warrior**, walks to the city.

To learn more about the specific endings that the *yad* pronoun uses, see our [lesson on kim and yad](#).

Using *yad* with *tad*

We can use *yad* with pronouns like *tad* (“that”) to create even more complex sentences. In each sentence below, the highlighted pronouns have the same gender and number. But by using different cases, we can show different relationships:

या पृच्छति सा रामस्य पत्नी ।

yā pr̥cchati sā rāmasya patnī.

Who asks, **she** is Rama's wife. (literal translation)

The person **who** asks is Rama's wife. (natural translation)

यस्यै रामः फलं ददाति सा रामस्य पत्नी

yasyai rāmaḥ phalaṁ dadāti sā rāmasya patnī

To whom Rama gives a fruit, **she** is Rama's wife. (literal)

The person **to whom** Rama gives a fruit is Rama's wife. (natural)

यस्यै रामः फलं ददाति तस्याः पिता जनकः

yasyai rāmaḥ phalaṁ dadāti tasyāḥ pitā janakaḥ

To whom Rama gives a fruit, **her** father is Janaka. (literal)

The father of the one **to whom** Rama gives a fruit is Janaka. (natural)

Note the small difference in emphasis if we switch the order of these pronouns:

या पृच्छति सा रामस्य पत्नी ।

yā prcchati sā rāmasya patnī.

The person **who** asks is Rama's wife. (*yā* first)

सा पृच्छति या रामस्य पत्नी ।

sā prcchati yā rāmasya patnī.

She, **who** is Rama's wife, asks. (*sā* first)

The two English translations are quite different. But the Sanskrit remains simple and clear.

yatra, yadā, and others

There are various other words that we can use to create relative phrases. Here are some common uninflected words:

Word	Meaning
यथा <i>yathā</i>	in which way
यदा <i>yadā</i>	when
यदर्थम् <i>yadartham</i>	for which reason
यतः <i>yataḥ</i>	from what, for what reason
यत्र <i>yatra</i>	where

These words are often paired with the words below:

Word	Meaning
तथा <i>tathā</i>	in that way
तदा <i>tadā</i>	then
तदर्थम् <i>tadartham</i>	for that reason
ततः <i>tataḥ</i>	from that, for that reason
तत्र <i>tatra</i>	there

Likewise, here are some common adjectives:

Word	Meaning
यावत् <i>yāvat</i>	so much
यादृश <i>yādr̥śa</i>	of which kind

And the adjectives they are often paired with:

Word	Meaning
तावत् <i>tāvat</i>	that much
तादृश <i>tādr̥śa</i>	of that kind

Participles

In English grammar, the word **participle** refers to certain kinds of verbal adjectives. The following words are all examples of participles:

कुर्वन्

kurvan

while doing

करिष्यन्

karisyan

about to do

कृतम्

kṛtam

(has been) done

कृतवान्

kṛtavān

(has) done

कर्तव्यम्

kartavyam

should or must be done

Roughly, a participle is just a way to show that we perform one action that is related to another:

अहं गायन् चरामि ।

ahaṃ gāyan carāmi.

I walk **while singing**.

रामश् चरन् चखाद ।

rāmaś caran cakhāda.

Rama ate **while walking**.

In this lesson, we will learn more about how these different participles can be used.

Basic participles

The most basic way to use a participle is as a normal adjective:

अहं नृत्यन् गायामि ।

ahaṃ nṛṭyan gāyāmi.

I sing **while dancing**.

अहं खादन्तं सिंहं पश्यामि ।

ahaṃ khādantaṃ siṃhaṃ paśyāmi.

I see a lion **(who is) eating**.

Since participles are *verbal* adjectives, they behave somewhat like verbs. So, we can use them with other nominal words:

अहं राज्ञे नृत्यन् गायामि ।

ahaṃ rājñe nṛṭyan gāyāmi.

I sing **while dancing for the king**.

अहम् मांसम् खादन्तं सिंहं पश्यामि ।

ahaṃ māṃsam khādantaṃ siṃhaṃ paśyāmi.

I see a lion **(who is) eating meat**.

Simultaneous action with case 7

Also known as: the locative absolute

We often use participles to show that as *one* action is happening, *another* also happens. When we use participles this way, we often imply a connection between the two actions.

Usually, we show this by using the participle and the word it describes in case 7. For example, if we have these two simple sentences:

दशरथः शोचति ।

daśarathaḥ śocati.

Dasharatha grieves

रामो वनं गच्छति ।

rāmo vanaṃ gacchati.

Rama goes to the forest.

Then we can connect them like so:

दशरथे शोचति रामो वनं गच्छति ।

daśarathe śocati rāmo vanaṃ gacchati.

In Dasharatha grieving, Rama goes to the forest. (literal translation)

As Dasharatha grieves, Rama goes to the forest. (natural translation)

The word *śocati* here is an adjective in the case 7 singular. It is easily confused with the normal verb *śocati*. See our [lesson on consonant stems](#) for details on why this word looks the way it does.

We can use this same structure with other participles too:

रामे वनं गमिष्यति कैकेयी हृष्यति ।

rāme vanaṃ gamiṣyati kaikeyī hr̥ṣyati.

With Rama about to go to the forest, Kaikeyi rejoices.

रामे वनं गच्छति कैकेयी हृष्यति ।

rāme vanaṃ gacchati kaikeyī hr̥ṣyati.

With Rama going to the forest, Kaikeyi rejoices.

रामे वनं गते कैकेयी हृष्यति ।

rāme vanaṃ gate kaikeyī hr̥ṣyati.

With Rama gone to the forest, Kaikeyi rejoices.

Simultaneous action with case 6

Also known as: the genitive absolute

Just as we can express simultaneous actions with case 7, we can do the same with case 6. Usually, the meaning is that one action happens *in spite of* or *even as* another one occurs:

दशरथस्य शोचतो रामो वनं गच्छति ।

daśarathasya śocato rāmo vanam gacchati.

Even as Dasharatha grieves, Rama goes to the forest.

The word *śocataḥ* here is an adjective in the case 6 singular. It is *not* the normal verb *śocataḥ*. See our [lesson on consonant stems](#) for details.

The eight cases

Sanskrit has eight different **cases**. These cases can each express many different meanings, but each has a basic meaning that is easy to remember. And if we need to, we can modify this basic meaning by using extra uninflected words.

Case 1

Also known as: the nominative case, *prathamā vibhaktiḥ* (“first division”)

Case 1 can be thought of as the *default* case. Usually, it refers to the subject of the action:

सिंहः खादति ।

siṃhaḥ khādati.

The lion eats.

But this depends on the *prayoga* of the verb. In the two sentences below, note the difference in meaning, even though both sentences use case 1:

सिंहः खादति ।

siṃhaḥ khādati.

The lion eats.

(The lion is the subject of the sentence.)

सिंहः खाद्यते ।

siṃhaḥ khādyate.

The lion is eaten.

(The lion is the object of the sentence.)

Case 1 also has special uses in verbless sentences. For details, see the lesson on verbless sentences:

अश्वः कृष्णः ।

aśvaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ.

The horse is black.

अश्वो रामस्य ।

aśvo rāmasya.

The horse is Rama's.

Case 2

Also known as: the accusative case, *dvitīyā vibhaktiḥ* (“second division”)

Case 2 is generally the *object* of the action:

सिंहो ग्रामं पश्यति ।

siṃho grāmam paśyati.

The lion sees a village.

It is also used for destinations:

सिंहो ग्रामं गच्छति ।

siṃho grāmam gacchati.

The lion goes to the village.

Or for time and distance:

स मासम् अधीते

sa māsam adhīte

He studied for a month.

स योजनं चरति ।

sa yojanam carati.

He walked a yojana.

(A yojana is around 15 kilometers.)

Case 2 is also used with specific uninflected words like *antarā*, *antareṇa*, *ṛte*, and *prati*:

अन्तरा गृहं च वृक्षं च गजः ।

antarā gṛham ca vrkṣam ca gajaḥ.

There is an elephant between the house and the tree.

अन्तरेण विद्यां, किं शक्यम्?

antareṇa vidyām, kiṃ śakyam?

Without knowledge, what is possible?

ऋते ऽपि त्वां ते सुखिनो भविष्यन्ति ।

ṛte 'pi tvām te sukhino bhaviṣyanti.

Even without **you**, they will be happy.

गृहं प्रति भाषामहे ।

gṛhaṃ prati bhāṣāmahe.

Let's talk about the house.

Case 3

Also known as: the instrumental case, *tṛtīyā vibhaktiḥ* (“third division”)

Case 3 generally means “with” or “by means of”:

सिंहो मार्गेण ग्रामं गच्छति ।

siṃho mārgēṇa grāmaṃ gacchati.

The lion goes to the village **by means of the road**.

अहं धनुषा मृगं हन्मि ।

ahaṃ dhanuṣā mṛgaṃ hanmi.

I kill the deer **with (my) bow**.

For verbs in *karmaṇi* or *bhāve prayoga*, case 3 defines the agent of the action:

रामेण रावणो हन्यते

rāmeṇa rāvaṇo hanyate

Ravana is killed **by Rama**.

(*karmaṇi prayoga*)

मया सुप्यते ।

mayā supyate.

I sleep. (“By me, there is sleeping.”)

(*bhāve prayoga*)

We can also use this case with words like *saha* (“with”) or *vinā* (“without”) to show a sense of accompaniment:

रामः सीतया सह वनं गच्छति ।

rāmaḥ sītayā saha vanaṃ gacchati.

Rama goes to the forest **with** Sita.

रामो दशरथेन विना वनं गच्छति ।

rāmo daśarathena vinā vanaṃ gacchati.

Rama goes to the forest **without** Dasharatha.

Case 4

Also known as: the dative case, *caturthī vibhaktiḥ* (“fourth division”)

Case 4 generally means “for” or “for the sake of”:

सिंहो मांसाय ग्रामं गच्छति ।

siṃho māṃsāya grāmaṃ gacchati.

The lion goes to the village **for meat**.

सिंहः खादनाय ग्रामं गच्छति ।

siṃhaḥ khādanāya grāmaṃ gacchati.

The lion goes to the village **for eating** (“to eat”).

For verbs that express anger, jealousy, or blame, case 4 defines the target of the emotion:

रामो रावणाय क्रुध्यति ।

rāmo rāvaṇāya krudhyati.

Rama is angry **at Ravana**.

कैकेयी कौसल्याया ईर्ष्यति ।

kaikeyī kausalyāyā īrṣyati.

Kaikeyi is jealous **of Kausalya**.

(*kausalyāyai* becomes *kausalyāyā* due to sandhi)

Case 5

Also known as: the ablative case, *pañcamī vibhaktiḥ* (“fifth division”)

Case 5 generally means “from” or “because of”:

नरः वनाद् ग्रामं गच्छति ।

naraḥ vanād grāmaṃ gacchati.

A man goes from the forest to the village.

नरः भयाद् गृहं गच्छति ।

naraḥ bhayād grhaṃ gacchati.

The man goes home from (because of) fear.

For verbs that express fear or protection, case 5 defines the cause of fear:

अहम् रावणाद् भीतः

aham rāvaṇād bhītaḥ

I am scared of Ravana.

अहम् बालं सिंहाद् रक्षामि ।

aham bālaṃ siṃhād rakṣāmi.

I protect the boy from the lion.

If someone is being born, case 5 defines the father:

कृष्णो वसुदेवाद् देवक्यां जज्ञे

kṛṣṇo vasudevād devakyāṃ jajñe

Krishna was born from Vasudeva in Devaki.

In a comparison, case 5 has the sense of “than” or “compared to”:

सिंहो नराद् बलवत्तरः ।

siṃho narād balavattaraḥ.

The lion is stronger than the man.

Case 5 can also be used with words like *ā* and *apa*:

आ वनात्

ā vanāt

up to the forest

अप वनात्

apa vanāt

away from the forest

Case 6

Also known as: the genitive case, *ṣaṣṭhī vibhaktiḥ* (“sixth division”)

Case 6 generally means “of.” Generally, it expresses some connection between two nominals:

सिंहो नरस्य गृहं गच्छति ।

siṃho narasya gr̥haṃ gacchati.

The lion goes to the house of the man (or, the man's house).

सिंहो नरस्य मांसं खादति ।

siṃho narasya māṃsaṃ khādati.

The lion eats the meat of the man.

Generally, case 6 is a “catch-all” case that we use if no other case applies. In the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, it often expresses the same meanings as case 4:

रामं देहि तस्य ।

rāmaṃ dehi tasya.

Give Rama to him.

Case 7

Also known as: the locative case, *saptamī vibhaktiḥ* (“seventh division”)

Case 7 generally means “in” or “on”:

नरो सिंहे ऽस्ति ।

naro siṃhe 'sti.

The man is in the lion.

सिंहो ग्रामे चरति ।

siṃho grāme carati.

The lion walks in the village.

If someone is being born, case 7 defines the mother:

कृष्णो वसुदेवाद् देवक्यां जज्ञे

kṛṣṇo vasudevād devakyāṃ jajñe

Krishna was born from Vasudeva in Devaki.

More abstractly, case 7 describes the *context* of something:

रामे गते दशरथो दुःखितो बभूव

rāme gate daśaratho duḥkhito babhūva

When Rama had gone (in Rama's having gone), Dasharatha became unhappy.

अस्मिन् विषये को समर्थः

asmin viṣaye ko samarthaḥ

In this matter, who is capable?

Case 8

Also known as: the vocative case, *sambodhana* (“address”)

Case 8 addresses the person being spoken to:

हे नर त्वं खादितः ।

he nara tvam khāditaḥ.

Hey man! You have been eaten.

हे सिंह वनं गच्छ ।

he siṃha vanaṃ gaccha.

Hey lion! Go to the forest.

Review

The eight cases have several other minor uses. But this lesson summarizes the major patterns you will see and hear.

Devanagari

How Devanagari works

If you can already read another language that uses Devanagari, please see our note at the bottom of this lesson.

Devanagari (देवनागरी) is a script that is used to write languages like Hindi, Marathi, and Nepali. In modern times, it is the script most commonly used to write Sanskrit.

Devanagari is written from left to right and closely follows how Sanskrit is pronounced. If you hear a Sanskrit word, you will know exactly how to write it in Devanagari. And if you see a word written in Devanagari, you will know exactly how to pronounce it.

In the Latin script, one letter follows right after the other, from left to right. But in Devanagari, symbols are usually grouped into syllables:

दे व ना ग री

de va nā ga rī

Devanagari

सं स्कृ त म्

saṃ skṛ ta m

Sanskrit

Each syllable has at most one vowel. And where possible, syllables should not end with consonants.

By default, the symbols for consonants have the vowel sound *a* pronounced after them:

द व न ग र

da va na ga ra

स स्कृ त म्

sa ska ta ma

So to express the specific sounds we need, we must add extra marks to these consonants:

द → दे

da → *de*

न → ना

na → *nā*

र → री

ra → *rī*

स → सं

sa → *saṁ*

स्क → स्कृ

ska → *skṛ*

म → म्

ma → *m*

Also, notice that *ska* (स्क) is a combination of two other consonant symbols:

स् + क → स्क

s + ka → *ska*

Sanskrit has many consonant clusters, so when we write Sanskrit in Devanagari, we must use many different consonant combinations. For details, see the lesson on consonant clusters later in this topic.

Finally, the traditional practice when writing Sanskrit texts is to write words continuously, especially if words end with consonants:

फलम् इच्छामि → फलमिच्छामि

phalam icchāmi → *phalamicchāmi*

This is the basic idea of how Devanagari works.

Devanagari for Sanskrit

(This note is for those who can read another language in Devanagari.)

In Sanskrit, क is always pronounced as *ka*, **never** as *k*. Likewise for all consonant sounds. So, words like राम, अर्जुन, and योग are pronounced as *rāma*, *arjuna*, and *yoga*, **never** as *rām* or *arjun* or *yog*.

Sanskrit uses many consonant clusters that don't often appear in Hindi or other modern Indian languages. So even if you are comfortable reading Devanagari already, please see our lesson on consonant clusters.

Vowels and consonants

In this lesson, we will learn how to write vowels and consonants in Devanagari.

Vowels

When vowels do not follow consonants, they are written like this:

अ	आ	इ	ई	उ	ऊ
<i>a</i>	<i>ā</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>ī</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>ū</i>
ऋ	ॠ	ऌ	ॡ		
<i>ṛ</i>	<i>ṝ</i>	<i>ḷ</i>	<i>ḹ</i>		
ए	ऐ	ओ	औ		
<i>e</i>	<i>ai</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>au</i>		

We include the long vowel ॡ here for the sake of being complete, but it is never used in real Sanskrit.

In general, short and long vowels are written in a similar way. Notice the similarities between अ and आ, इ and ई, उ and ऊ, ऋ and ॠ, and ऌ and ॡ. This pattern also applies to ए and ऐ, as well as ओ and औ. In each pair, notice that the second symbol adds some mark or extra feature to the first.

Consonants

When we write Sanskrit in Devanagari, all consonants are pronounced with the vowel *a* by default. So, the symbol क is always pronounced as *ka*, never as *k*.

क <i>ka</i>	ख <i>kha</i>	ग <i>ga</i>	घ <i>gha</i>	ङ <i>ṅa</i>
च <i>ca</i>	छ <i>cha</i>	ज <i>ja</i>	झ <i>jha</i>	ञ <i>ña</i>
ट <i>ṭa</i>	ठ <i>ṭha</i>	ड <i>ḍa</i>	ढ <i>ḍha</i>	ण <i>ṇa</i>
त <i>ta</i>	थ <i>tha</i>	द <i>da</i>	ध <i>dha</i>	न <i>na</i>
प <i>pa</i>	फ <i>pha</i>	ब <i>ba</i>	भ <i>bha</i>	म <i>ma</i>
य <i>ya</i>	र <i>ra</i>	ल <i>la</i>	व <i>va</i>	
श <i>śa</i>	ष <i>ṣa</i>	स <i>sa</i>	ह <i>ha</i>	

Some of these consonants are difficult to tell apart at first. Here are the consonants that are most easily confused:

ख ख
kha kha

घ घ
gha dha

ढ ढ

ṇa ḍa

च ज

ca ja

ट ठ ढ द

ṭa ṭha ḍha da

प फ य ष

pa pha ya ṣa

भ म

bha ma

व ब

va ba

As you learn these symbols, it may help to make mnemonics to keep them distinct in your head. For example:

- घ is a “g” sound, and it looks like a *gut* full of *gas*.
- ङ is a nasal sound, and its dot looks like a *nose* ring.
- च is a “c” sound and looks like a *chewing* mouth.
- ज is a “j” sound and looks like a sharp *javelin*.
- ब and भ are “b” sounds, and they look *broken*.

Of course, the mnemonics that stick best are the ones you think of yourself.

Vowel marks

Vowels that follow consonants are written as small “marks” around the consonant they follow:

क + आ → का

$ka + \bar{a} \rightarrow k\bar{a}$

क + उ → कू

$ka + u \rightarrow k\bar{u}$

Here are the marks that we use when writing Sanskrit:

क <i>ka</i>	का <i>kā</i>	कि <i>ki</i>	की <i>kī</i>	कु <i>ku</i>	कू <i>kū</i>
कृ <i>kr̥</i>	कृ <i>kr̄</i>	क्लृ <i>kl̥</i>	क्लृ <i>kl̄</i>		
के <i>ke</i>	कै <i>kai</i>	को <i>ko</i>	कौ <i>kau</i>		

Again, we include the long vowel कृ (*kī*) for the sake of being complete, but it is never used in real Sanskrit.

The important point to remember here is that the vowel *a* has no special mark. *a* is present by default. If needed, we can block that default *a* sound with a mark called the *virāma*, which we discuss further below.

Most consonants use these marks in a regular way. But perhaps the combinations below will be surprising:

रु

ru

रू

rū

रृ

rr̥

ह्र

hr̥

ह्र̄

hr̄

anusvāra, visarga, candrabindu, and virāma

The *anusvāra* and *visarga* are written as follows:

कं

kaṁ

कः

kaḥ

The *candrabindu* (“moon dot”) shows that a sound is pronounced nasally. It is usually used for nasal vowels:

कँ

kã

Finally, the *virāma* (“cessation”) blocks the default *a* sound that a consonant has otherwise:

क्

k

Consonant clusters

A **consonant cluster** is a group of consecutive consonants with no vowel sounds between them. Consonant clusters are common in Sanskrit, so they are common when we write Sanskrit in Devanagari.

Not all styles of Devanagari will use all of these consonant clusters. And, the clusters you will see online depend greatly on how well your computer supports these clusters.

First, here are the two clusters you absolutely must know:

क्ष
kṣa

ज्ञ
jña

Why must we know these two clusters? These two clusters do not resemble their original consonants at all, so we cannot guess what sounds they represent. That is why we must learn them separately.

Now, let's consider the other consonant clusters. Notice that most Devanagari consonants have a single vertical line running from top to bottom. Usually, this line is on the right side of the consonant:

त
ta

ण
ṇa

स
sa

In many consonant clusters, the first consonant loses this line and attaches to the consonant that follows it:

त्स
tsa

ण्ड
ṇḍa

स्त
sta

If *ra* is the first consonant, we simply add a small hook to the top of the second:

र्त

rta

र्न

rna

र्म

rma

If *ra* is second, we add a small tick to the first consonant:

प्र

pra

क्र

kra

त्र

tra

But consonants with a “hoop” shape (like ट, ठ, and ढ) use a different symbol instead:

ट्र

ṭra

ठ्र

ṭhra

ढ्र

ḍhra

If *na* is second, we write it in the same way as *ra*:

प्न

pna

क्न

kna

त्न

tna

If *ha* or *da* is first and *ya* or *ma* is second, we get these combinations:

द्य

dya

द्म

dma

ह्य

hya

ह्म

hma

If *śa* is first, it becomes a smaller form that sits on top of the second consonant:

श्र

śra

श्व

śva

श्च

śca

श्ल

śla

If *śa* is first, it often stacks vertically on top of the consonants that follow it:

ष्ट

ṣṭa

ष्ठ

ṣṭha

ष्ठ्व

ṣṭhva

Voiced aspirated consonants that follow *da* usually “dangle” off the bottom of the *da*:

द्ध

dgha

द्ध

ddha

द्भ

dbha

ta combines in various ways that are hard to predict:

क्त

кта

त्त

त्ता

And if three or more consonants are in a cluster, we sometimes get more complex combinations:

त्त्र

त्त्रा

स्त्र

स्त्रा

क्ष्य

ñkhya

क्ष्य

ñksya

क्त्य

ñktya



dghra



ddhra



dbhra

Numerals and punctuation

In this lesson, we will learn how to write numbers and various punctuation marks in Devanagari.

Numerals

The numerals that we use in English originate in India. As a result, the numerals we use in Devanagari are quite similar to the ones we use in English:

०	१	२	३	४
0	1	2	3	4
५	६	७	८	९
5	6	7	8	9

And they are used just like English numerals:

१९४७
1947

२०२१
2021

Punctuation

Modern Sanskrit texts make use of various English punctuation marks, including exclamation points (!), commas (,), and quotation marks ("").

But traditionally, Devanagari uses only a small set of punctuation marks. You can see all of them below:

।
/

॥
//

ऽ
'

The first is called the **daṇḍa** (“stick”), which marks the end of a sentence or the middle point of a verse:

रामो गच्छति ।

rāmo gacchati.

Rama goes.

The second is sometimes called a double **daṇḍa**, and it marks the end of a paragraph or verse:

रामो लङ्कां गच्छति । रामो रावणं हन्ति ॥

rāmo laṅkāṃ gacchati. rāmo rāvaṇaṃ hanti.

Rama goes to Lanka. Rama kills Ravana.

The last is called the **avagraha**, and it is sometimes used to show that a vowel was removed due to a sound change rule:

श्वेतः अश्वः → श्वेतो ऽश्वः

śvetaḥ aśvaḥ → śveto 'śvaḥ

white horse

ते अश्वाः → ते ऽश्वाः

te aśvāḥ → te 'śvāḥ

They are horses.

An **avagraha** may even be repeated if the vowel removed was long:

सा आस्ते → सा ऽऽस्ते

sā āste → sā "ste

She sits.

Old Devanagari

Certain Devanagari letters have older versions that are no longer commonly used. You can see these older versions below:

Old Devanagari	New Devanagari
𑂔	अ
𑂔ा	आ
𑂔ो	ओ
𑂔ौ	औ
𑂔	झ
𑂔ा	ण

Vedic Devanagari

In this lesson, we have a few small notes on writing Vedic Sanskrit with Devanagari.

la and lha

In some styles of Vedic recitation, the consonants *ḍa* and *ḍha* become la and lha respectively. Here is how to write these two sounds in Devanagari:

ल
la

लह
lha

Accent

When we write Vedic Sanskrit in Devanagari, we often use many **accent marks** to show how a vowel should be pronounced. Most commonly, we see just three accents: *anudātta*, *udātta*, and *svarita*.

In modern recitation, the *anudātta* is usually a low tone and the *svarita* is usually a high tone. The *udātta* is usually a middle tone that exists between these two. Here is how the *anudātta*, *udātta*, and *svarita* are usually written:

अ
a

अ
a

अ
a'

Note that *udātta* has no explicit mark and is assumed by default.

Other scripts

Romanized Sanskrit

The alphabet that we use in English is sometimes called the **Roman** alphabet. **Romanized Sanskrit** is the general term for any Sanskrit text that is written in the Roman alphabet.

Romanized Sanskrit became popular among Western scholars when they encountered Sanskrit for the first time, and it became more established in the 19th century. But even though that era has long passed, romanized Sanskrit is still often used today. This is for a few reasons:

- If you can read Roman letters already, it's easy to learn and read romanized Sanskrit.
- Romanized Sanskrit doesn't lose any information. That is, we can always convert it back to Devanagari or another script.
- Romanized Sanskrit is often easier to use with computers.

Today, it is easier than ever to display Sanskrit in Devanagari or another Indian script. But even so, it is useful to know about romanized Sanskrit and how to use it.

IAST

The **International Alphabet for Sanskrit Transliteration**, or **IAST** for short, became common among Western scholars in the 19th century. You can see the IAST letters below:

a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	ṛ	ṝ	ḷ	ḹ
e	ai	o	au	am̐	ah̐				
ka	kha	ga	gha	ṇa					
ca	cha	ja	jha	ṇa					
ṭa	ṭha	ḍa	ḍha	ṇa					
ta	tha	da	dha	na					
pa	pha	ba	bha	ma					
ya	ra	la	va						
śa	ṣa	sa	ha						

ISO-15919

ISO-15919 is the modern standard for romanizing all Indian languages, including Sanskrit. “ISO” stands for the International Standards Organization, and “15919” is a numeric code associated with the standard.

IAST and ISO-15919 are largely similar. But they differ in a few letters:

a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	ṛ	ṝ	ḷ	ḹ
ē	ai	ō	au	aṁ	aḥ				
ka	kha	ga	gha	ṇa					
ca	cha	ja	jha	ṇa					
ṭa	ṭha	ḍa	ḍha	ṇa					
ta	tha	da	dha	na					
pa	pha	ba	bha	ma					
ya		ra	la	va					
śa		ṣa	sa	ha					

Sanskrit software

Why use Sanskrit software?

Sanskrit software is the name for various computer programs that process Sanskrit. We think every Sanskrit learner today should know the basics of using Sanskrit software. Here's why:

- **Dictionaries:** With modern tools, you can search multiple Sanskrit dictionaries in less than a second.
- **Analysis tools:** If you don't recognize a word ending, you can quickly search a database of all Sanskrit words and expressions.
- **Search:** If you want more information on a Sanskrit word or verse, you can search the entire Internet in moments.
- **Writing:** There are several online communities of Sanskrit learners. And if you can write Sanskrit, you can join these communities and communicate with them.

In this topic, we will discuss the basics of Sanskrit software and share some of our favorite programs.

The Harvard-Kyoto system

Devanagari and romanized Sanskrit use symbols that we can't find on a standard computer keyboard. So it can be difficult to type either of these on a computer. This is a problem because if we can't type Sanskrit, we can't write Sanskrit content or use various Sanskrit tools.

One workaround to this problem is to define some way to *map* English letters to Sanskrit letters. In the examples below, the text on the left and the right is the same. But the text on the left uses the **Harvard-Kyoto system**, and the text on the right uses either Devanagari or romanized Sanskrit:

saMskRtA bhASA → संस्कृता भाषा

zrIbhagavAn uvAca → śrībhagavān uvāca

The Harvard-Kyoto system is one of the easiest mappings to learn, and it the mapping that most Sanskrit tools and software expect. Here is how the system is defined:

a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	ṛ	ṝ
a	A	i	I	u	U	R	RR

ḷ	ḹ	e	ai	o	au	aṃ	aḥ
lR	lRR	e	ai	o	au	aM	aH

ka	kha	ga	gha	ṇa	ca	cha	ja	jha	ṇa
ka	kha	ga	gha	Ga	ca	cha	ja	jha	Ja

ṭa	ṭha	ḍa	ḍha	ṇa	ta	tha	da	dha	na
Ta	Tha	Da	Dha	Na	ta	tha	da	dha	na

pa	pha	ba	bha	ma
pa	pha	ba	bha	ma

ya	ra	la	va	śa	ṣa	sa	ha
ya	ra	la	va	za	Sa	sa	ha

How to type in Sanskrit

Sanskrit can be challenging to type because it needs symbols that we can't find on a standard computer keyboard. Thankfully, there are several great solutions that make it easy to type Sanskrit on a computer.

Transliteration software

Transliteration is when we convert one script into another. With the help of transliteration software, we can first write Sanskrit using English letters then use the program to convert our work into the script we want.

For example, we can use the Harvard-Kyoto system that we learned about in the previous lesson. By writing in Harvard-Kyoto and using a transliteration program, we can convert our text into the script we want:

saMskRtA bhASA → संस्कृता भाषा

saMskRtA bhASA → saṃskṛtā bhāṣā

We are biased, but we recommend our own [Sanscript program](#), which has been one of the most popular transliteration tools for over a decade.

Input method editors

Transliteration software is convenient and easy, but there are more powerful tools that are a little faster. **Input method editors** convert what you type into your desired script in real time. The downside is that they require much more setup work. Here are our recommendations:

- For Windows users, we recommend [Baraha](#).
- For Mac OSX users, we recommend [Lipika IME](#).

How to use a Sanskrit-English dictionary

A **Sanskrit-English dictionary** lets you search for Sanskrit words and see their definitions in English. If you plan to learn Sanskrit through English, a good Sanskrit-English dictionary is invaluable.

There are two Sanskrit-English dictionaries worth knowing about. These are:

- V. S. Apte's *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, which is especially clear
- The Monier-Williams *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. This is the main dictionary used by English-speaking Sanskrit scholars in the West.

Both of these dictionaries were created in the 19th century. But thanks to the [Cologne Digital Sanskrit Dictionaries project](#), both of these dictionaries are freely available and searchable online.

In this lesson, we'll learn how to use the Cologne interface to search for different words. Let's search for the following two words:

कृष्णस्य

kṛṣṇasya

अकुर्वत

akurvata

Step 1: Find the root or stem

Sanskrit is a *highly inflected* language. A nominal stem can use dozens of different endings, and a verb root might have thousands of different forms.

Rather than store all of these forms, these dictionaries store just the essential information. For verbs, they store the verb root. For nominals, they store the nominal stem.

So our first step is to convert the words above to their stem and root forms.

कृष्णस्य → कृष्ण

kr̥ṣṇasya → *kr̥ṣṇa*

अकुर्वत → कृ

akurvata → *kr̥*

Step 2: Transliterate your word

Many dictionary programs understand only a small number of different scripts. The Cologne interface understands Devanagari and romanized Sanskrit. But if you don't have an IME available on your computer, it is more convenient to enter your search in Harvard-Kyoto:

कृष्ण → kRSNa

कृ → kR

Step 3: Search!

By default, the Cologne interfaces expect Harvard-Kyoto and produce output in Devanagari. If you like these settings, you can try searching for your word in either [the Apte dictionary](#) or [the Monier-Williams dictionary](#).

Final thoughts

Once you get used to an online dictionary, it's difficult to go back to paper books. With practice, you can quickly and accurately find the information you need.

We're working on our own learner-friendly dictionary interface. If you would like to help us test it, [let us know](#).

Lists

Grammatical Terms

This page contains almost all of the technical terms we use on learnsanskrit.org.

Each row in the table below contains four items:

- The term as it appears on our website
- The standard English term, which you will generally see used in Western resources
- The standard Sanskrit term
- Specialist terms used in Paninian grammar

General terms

learnsanskrit.org	English	Sanskrit	Paninian
adjective	—	<i>viśeṣaṇa</i>	—
adverb	—		
agreement	—		
aspirated	—	<i>mahāprāṇa</i>	—
<i>ātmanepada</i>	middle voice	<i>ātmanepada</i>	—
case	—	<i>vibhakti</i>	—
case 1 (subject)	nominative case	<i>prathamā</i>	—
case 2 (object)	accusative case	<i>dvitīyā</i>	—
case 3 (“with”)	instrumental case	<i>ṭṛtīyā</i>	—
case 4 (“for”)	dative case	<i>caturthī</i>	—
case 5 (“from”)	ablative case	<i>pañcamī</i>	—
case 6 (“of”)	genitive case	<i>ṣaṣṭhī</i>	—
case 7 (“in”)	locative case	<i>saptamī</i>	—
case 8 (address)	vocative case	<i>sambodhana</i>	—
causal verb	causative		<i>ṇijanta</i>
command mood	imperative mood	<i>ājñā</i>	<i>loṭ</i>
compound (word)	—	<i>samāsa</i>	—
compound vowel	diphthong	<i>saṃdhyakṣara</i>	<i>ec</i>
conditional mood	—	<i>saṃketa</i>	<i>lṛṇ</i>
consonant	—	<i>vyañjana</i>	<i>hal</i>
desiderative	—		<i>sannanta</i>
distant future tense	periphrastic future	<i>anadyatana- bhaviṣyat</i>	<i>luṭ</i>
distant past tense	perfect	<i>parokṣa-bhūta</i>	<i>liṭ</i>
doubling	reduplication	<i>dvitva</i>	—
dual (number)	—	<i>dvivacana</i>	—
dvandva	copulative compound	<i>dvandva</i>	—
feminine gender	—	<i>strīliṅga</i>	—
first person	—	<i>uttama</i>	—
gender	—	<i>liṅga</i>	—

<i>-tvā</i>	gerund	<i>ktvānta</i>	
grammatical case	(see “case”)		
grammar	—	<i>vyākaraṇa</i>	
hard palate	—	<i>tālu</i>	—
heavy (syllable)	—	<i>guru</i>	—
intensive	—		<i>yañanta</i>
light (syllable)	—	<i>laghu</i>	—
lip	—	<i>oṣṭha</i>	—
long vowel	—	<i>dīrgha</i>	—
masculine gender	—	<i>puṃliṅga</i>	—
medium vowel	full grade vowel	<i>guṇa</i>	—
nasal	—	<i>anunāsika</i>	—
neuter gender	—	<i>napuṃsakaliṅga</i>	
noun ending	—		<i>sup</i>
noun from verb	denominative	<i>nāmadhātu</i>	
noun	—	<i>nāma</i>	<i>subanta</i>
number	—	<i>vacana</i>	—
object	—	<i>karman</i>	—
option mood	present optative	<i>vidhi</i>	<i>vidhi-liṅ</i>
ordinary future tense	simple future	<i>bhaviṣyat</i>	
ordinary past tense	imperfect	<i>anadyatana-bhūta</i>	<i>laṅ</i>
parasmaipada	active voice	<i>parasmaipada</i>	—
participle	—		
person	—	<i>puruṣa</i>	<i>puruṣa</i>
plural (number)	—	<i>bahuvacana</i>	
point of pronunciation	point of articulation	<i>uccāraṇa-sthāna</i>	
prefix	(see “verb prefix”)		
present tense	present indicative	<i>vartamāna</i>	<i>laṭ</i>
primary (suffix)	—	<i>kṛt</i>	
pronoun	—	<i>sarvanāman</i>	—
recent past tense	aorist	<i>bhūta</i>	<i>luṅ</i>

sibilant	—	<i>ūṣman</i>	<i>śal</i>
sandhi	—	—	—
second person	—	<i>madhyama</i>	—
secondary (suffix)	—	<i>taddhita</i>	—
semivowel	—	<i>antaḥstha</i>	
short vowel		<i>hrasva</i>	—
simple vowel	—	<i>samānākṣara</i>	—
singular (number)	—	<i>ekavacana</i>	—
soft palate	—	<i>kaṇṭha</i>	
stem (of a noun)	—	<i>prātipadika</i>	—
stem (of any word)	—	<i>aṅga</i>	—
stop	—	<i>sparśa</i>	
strong vowel	lengthened grade vowel	<i>vṛddhi</i>	
subject	—	<i>kartṛ</i>	
suffix	—	<i>pratyaya</i>	—
syllable	—	<i>akṣara</i>	
third person	—	<i>prathama</i>	—
tooth	—	<i>danta</i>	
<i>ubhayapada</i>		<i>ubhayapada</i>	
unaspirated	—	<i>alpaprāṇa</i>	
uninflected word		<i>avyaya</i>	<i>avyaya</i>
unvoiced	—	<i>aghoṣa</i>	
verb class	—	<i>gaṇa</i>	—
verb ending	—		<i>tiṅ</i>
verb prefix	—	<i>upasarga, gati, cvi, ...</i>	<i>upasarga, gati, cvi, ...</i>
verb root	—	<i>dhātu</i>	—
verb	—		<i>tiṅanta</i>
verbless sentence	nominal sentence		
voiced	—	<i>ghoṣavat</i>	—
vowel	—	<i>svara</i>	<i>ac</i>

Other terms

learnsanskrit.org	English	Sanskrit	Paninian
<i>bhū</i> class	Class 1	<i>bhvādigāṇa</i>	—
<i>tud</i> class	Class 6	<i>adādigāṇa</i>	—
<i>cur</i> class	Class 10	<i>curādigāṇa</i>	—
<i>krī</i> class	Class 9	<i>kryādigāṇa</i>	—
<i>rudh</i> class	Class 7	<i>rudhādigāṇa</i>	—
<i>su</i> class	Class 5	<i>svādigāṇa</i>	—
<i>tan</i> class	Class 8	<i>tanādigāṇa</i>	—
<i>div</i> class	Class 4	<i>divādigāṇa</i>	—
<i>hu</i> class	Class 3	<i>juhotyādigāṇa</i>	—
<i>ad</i> class	Class 2	<i>adādigāṇa</i>	—