

Lesson 2

Basic Verbs

We begin with some simple verbs which can be used to construct some very simple sentences.

Sanskrit has a dual tense also, which is occasionally used, so one should be familiar with the endings which define it.

The present tense is the easiest to understand.

Present Tense of the Verb gaccha 'to go' (root - gam)		
Singular	Dual	Plural
गच्छामि	गच्छावः	गच्छामः
gacchāmi - 'I go'	gacchāvah- 'we two go'	gacchāmah - 'we go'
गच्छसि	गच्छथः	गच्छथ
gacchasi - 'you go'	gacchathah - 'you two go'	gacchatha- 'you go'
गच्छति	गच्छतः	गच्छन्ति
gacchati - 'he goes' 'she goes' 'it goes'	gacchatah - 'those two go'	gacchanti - 'they go'

Now, don't bother to learn all this off by heart. You will quickly become disinterested and not get very far. We will now start to compile some simple sentences which will help to learn the language. This will be more interesting than reciting grammatical paradigms.

In order to construct a simple sentence we obviously need a noun. In Sanskrit, like most other languages, nouns have case. We will use the first and second cases of the noun *nagara* 'city or town'.

नगरः - The town (as subject of verb)

नगरम् - The town (as object of verb)

नगर विशाल् भवति *nagar vishāl bhavati* - The town becomes large (vast)

नगरम् गच्छामी - I go to the town

The normal syntax for sanskrit sentences is subject, object, verb.

Another point we need to note now is that in writing sanskrit into roman lettering it is best to use the standard diacritical marks which have long been used in dictionaries to indicate proper pronunciation. This is to ensure the spelling follows the intended pronunciation. The most important vowel symbols are:

ā - which is a long vowel as in 'father'

ī - as in 'cheese'

ū - like 'choose'

For example, the transliteration of the above two sentences would be as follows:

'nagar vishāl bhavati' and 'nagaram gachhāmī'

For more details please check out the lessons at learnsanskrit.org

Of course you can also have simple sentences without having a verb as in:

सूर्यः सः sūryah sah 'that is the sun'

In introducing these first simple sentences we have also introduced two '**thematic**' verbs, **gaccha** 'go' and **bhava** 'become'. In the next lesson, we will have a closer look at verbs of this type and look at a typical table of 'declension' of the verb.

We have also seen two cases of a noun. We will look more at cases of nouns in Lesson 3.

The personal pronoun 'sah' (normally meaning 'he') has also been introduced. The full paradigm for the **nominative** and **accusative** cases are shown in the following table.

Personal Pronoun Singular - Nominative				
First Person	Second Person	Third Person		
अहम् aham 'I'	त्वम् tvam 'you'	सः sah 'he'	तत् tat 'it'	सा sā 'she'
माम् mām 'me'	त्वाम् tvām 'you'	तम् tam 'he'	तत् tat 'it'	ताम् tām 'she'

The **nominative** case represents the **subject** of the verb, whilst the **accusative** represents the **object**.

Back to our simple sentences.

नगरम् गच्छामी - I go to the town

नगरम् गच्छसि - You go to the town (*singular*)

नगरम् गच्छति - He/she goes to the town (*according to context*)

If you want to specify 'she goes to the town', then add the personal pronoun sā ('she')

सा नगरम् गच्छति - She goes to the town

Present Tense of the Verb bhav 'to become'		
Singular	Dual	Plural
भवामि	भवावः	भवामः
bhavāmi - 'I become'	bhavāvah - 'we both become'	bhavāmah - 'we become'
भवसि	भवथः	भवथ
bhavasi - 'you become'	bhavathah - 'you two become'	bhavatha - 'you become'
भवति	भवतः	भवन्ति
bhavati - 'he becomes' 'she becomes' 'it becomes'	bhavatah - 'those two become'	bhavanti - 'they become'

सुखम् भवामि - I become happy (sukha)

सुखम् भवथः - You two become happy

सुखम् भवन्ति - They become happy

Now we can introduce च - ch 'and'

Of course ch 'and' is used a little differently in sanskrit. Two items, or actions, are followed by 'ch', rather than being inserted in between. For example, 'men and women' would be 'men women and' so to speak.

सा नगरम् गच्छति सुखम् भवति च - 'She goes to the town **and** becomes happy'.

Although technically it should probably be written as भवतिश्च whereby the final verb and conjunction are joined according to the rules of 'sandhi'. More about **sandhi** (or 'samdhi') later.

सूर्य चन्द्र च becomes सूर्य चन्द्रश्च sūrya chandraścha ('sun and moon') through sandhi. The important thing to remember is that sanskrit words are pronounced exactly as they are spelt (and vice versa). Therefore the spelling can change according to how words change in conjunction with other words. There are strict rules for **sandhi**, but it is pointless trying to remember them, you will only give yourself a headache. In time you will recognise and understand its usage through experience.

There are two basic types of verb in sanskrit:

Active Voice - *parasmaipada* ('for another')

This type of verb, which we have been using up to this point, is usually used for activity (such as go, come, ask) and where the verb is used with an object. The action is to or for another object. In theory an object is required.

नगरम् अगच्छति - he comes to the town

Passive Voice - *ātmanepada* ('for the self')

Normally used when the result of the action goes to the self. The verb does not necessarily require an object.

स मृयते - he dies

Passive Present Tense of the Verb labh 'to obtain'		
Singular	Dual	Plural
लभे labhe - 'I obtain'	लभावहे labhāvahe - 'we (2) obtain'	लभामहे labhāmahe - 'we obtain'
लभसे labhase - 'you obtain'	लभेथे labhethē - 'you (2) obtain'	लभध्वे labhadhve - 'you (pl) obtain'
लभते labhate - 'he/she obtains'	लभेते labhete - 'those (2) obtain'	लभन्ते labhante - 'they obtain'

Verb Classes (adapted from *Teach Yourself Sanskrit* - Michael Coulson)

Thematic Verbs

Class I - Root expanded to 'guna' grade

- suc - **socati** (he/she grieves)
- ji - **jayati** (he conquers)
- bhu - **bhavati** (he becomes)

Class IV - root + ya

- nrt - **nrtyati** (he dances)

Class VI - root remains the same

- likh - **likhati** (he writes)
- prcch - **prcchati** (he asks)

Class X - ay added to the root (often 'gunated')

- cur - **corayati** (he robs)
- tad - **tādayati** (he beats)

These are causative verbs

Of the ten classes of sanskrit verbs, the thematic classes are the least complicated. However, there are exceptions to the above rules.

- gam - **gacchati** (he goes)
- is - **icchati** (he desires)
- ranj - **rajyati** (he becomes red)
- sic - **sincati** (he sprinkles)
- stha - **tishtati** (he stands)

It is advisable not to try and memorise all of the paradigms. Just become acquainted with the general principles.

Athematic Verbs

These do not have the thematic 'a' vowel inserted before the endings. They are more complicated than thematic verbs (above). Again we shall only look at the present active tense to begin.

Class II - 'root' class. Endings added directly to root.

- āp - **āpnoti** (he/she obtains)
- sru - **srunoti** (he hears)

Class VII - root plus nasal infix n/na

- bhuj - **bhunakti** (he enjoys)
- yuj - **yunakti** (he joins)
- " - **yunjanti** (they join)

Class VIII - root plus u/o (similar to class V)

- kr - **karoti** (he does)
- tan - **tanoti** (he stretches)

Class IX - root plus nā/nī
grah - **grhnāti** (he seizes)
jna - **jānāti** (he knows)

Present Tense of the Verb 'as' - 'to be'		
Singular	Dual	Plural
अस्मि	स्वः	स्मः
asmi - 'I am'	svah - 'we two are'	smah - 'we are'
असि	स्थः	स्थ
asi - 'you are'	sthah - 'you two are'	stha - 'you are' (pl)
अस्ति	स्तः	सन्ति
asti - 'he is'	stah - 'those two are'	santi - 'they are'

Past Passive Participles (adapted from *Teach Yourself Sanskrit* - Michael Coulson)

Formed by adding **-ta**, **-ita**, or **-na** to the unstrengthened root. For each verb only one of these endings may be used. Rules of internal sandhi apply.

sikta (moistened) from sic
drsta (seen) from drs
dugdha (milked) from duh

Samprasarana occurs (ie a semi-vowel becomes a vowel and vice versa).

ukta (spoken) from vac
ista (sacrificed) from yaj
prsta (asked) from pracch

Generally the structure of words change according to the changes in pronunciation that facilitate ease of speech.

Formed by adding **-ita**. Includes class 10 & causatives, ie those which make their present stem with **-aya-**

corita (stolen) from cur
pidita (afflicted) from pid
marita (killed) from mr

Some other verbs also make their past passive participles in **-ita**
likhita (written) from **likh**

Formed by adding **-na**. Usually from roots ending in vowel.

mlana (withered) from **mlai**

ksina (destroyed) from **ksi**

Absolute or Continuative of Verbs.

These express 'having ...' or 'after having ...'

In **-tva**, formed by substituting **-ta** or **-na** of past participle

uktva 'after saying'

drstva 'after seeing'

-tva is not used with prefixed compounds.

-ya is used with prefixed compounds.

samdrsya 'after seeing'

agamya 'after coming'

Roots ending in short vowel add **-tya**

agatya 'after coming'

ajitya 'after not having been conquered'

Exceptions:

derivative verbs in **-ayati**

past participle in **-ita**

simple absolute in **-ayitva**

*unprefixed stems

karayitva 'having caused to do'

bhavayitva 'having caused to be'

*prefixed stems

agamayya 'having caused to come'

Verbal Prefixes

The most common verbal prefixes and their primary meanings (*many of the verb roots here are actually past participles*):

a - to, unto, at

eg **अविक्षत** **avikshat** - 'whole, entire, not torn' (root - **kshat** 'torn, wounded')

abhi - to, unto, against (often forcefully)

eg **अभिघातः** **abhigātaḥ** - 'striking, beating' (root - **ghāt** 'strike, kill, destroy')

adhi - above, over, on, onto

eg अधिपति **adhipati** - 'overlord'

antar - between, among, within

eg अंतर्गत **antargata** - 'gone into, between' (root - **gata** 'gone')

anu - after, along, following, imitating

eg अनुगत **anugata** - 'gone after, followed' (root - **gata** 'gone')

apa - away, forth, off

eg अपगतिः **apagatih** - 'bad fate, misfortune' (root - **gata** 'gone')

ati - across, beyond, past, over, to excess

eg अतिक्रमः **atikramah** - 'travelled across/over' (root - **kram** 'move along')

ava - down, off

eg अवक्रांति **avakrānti** - 'descent' (root - **krānti** 'going, proceeding')

du - bad, difficult, adverse (normally becomes **dus** or **dur**)

eg दुष्कृत **dushkrt** - 'ill-doing, misdeed' (root - **kr** 'do')

ni - in, down, into

eg निक्षिप्त **nikshipta** - 'thrown down, abandoned' (root - **kship** 'throw')

nis - out, forth (also becomes **nir**)

eg निष्क्रमः **niskramah** - 'going out, departing' (root - **kram** 'move along')

para - away, forth, distant

eg पराक्रमः **parākramah** - 'courage, marching against' (root - **kram** 'move along')

pari - around, about

eg परिक्रमः **parikramah** - 'roaming around/about' (root - **kram** 'move along')

pra - forward, onward, forth

eg प्रख्यात **prakhyāta** - 'famous, celebrated' (root - **khyāt** 'proclaimed')

prati - against, reverse

eg प्रतिपक्षित **pratipakshita** - 'contradicted' (root - **paksh** 'to side with')

sam - with, together, along with

eg संतुष्ट **samtushta** - 'contented with' (root - **tush** 'to be contented')

su - good, well

eg सुकृत **sukrt** - 'well-done' (root - **kr** 'do')

ud - up, out, above

eg उद्गच्छति **udgacchati** - 'move above' (root - **gam** 'to go')

upa - to, toward

eg उपदिशति **upadishati** - 'to teach' (root - **dish** 'to point out')

vi - away, separated, apart

eg विक्षत **vikshat** - 'torn asunder, wounded' (root - **kshat** 'torn, wounded')

There are also many verbs which have two or more prefixes.

SL Abhyankar has provided an excellent guide on learning how to use the verbs at his site **Simple Sanskrit** (see the beginning lessons):

<http://simplesanskrit.wordpress.com>

However, you will need to understand the devanagari script beforehand.

