

----- Lesson-10

General introduction to the tenses.

In Sanskrit, verbs are associated with ten different forms of usage. Of these six relate to the tenses and four relate to moods. We shall examine the usages now.

Six tenses are identified as follows. The tenses directly relate to the time associated with the activity specified in the verb, i.e., whether the activity referred to in the verb is taking place now or has it happened already or if it will happen or going to happen etc.

Present tense: वर्तमान कालः

There is only one form for the present tense.

Past tense: भूत कालः

Past tense has three forms associated with it.

1. Expressing something that had happened sometime in the recent past, typically last few days.
2. Expressing something that might have just happened, typically in the earlier part of the day.
3. Expressing something that had happened in the distant past about which we may not have much or any knowledge.

Future tense: भविष्यत् कालः

Future tense has two forms associated with it.

1. Expressing something that is certainly going to happen.
2. Expressing something that is likely to happen.

-----Verb forms not associated with time.

There are four forms of the verb which do not relate to any time. These forms are called "moods" in the English language. English grammar specifies three

moods which are, Indicative mood, Imperative mood and the Subjunctive mood. In Sanskrit primers one sees a reference to four moods with a slightly different nomenclature. These are, Imperative mood, potential mood, conditional mood and benedictive mood. Since the nomenclature differs we will have to see what the moods in Sanskrit actually refer to.

The ten forms of usage of the verb are each given a name in Sanskrit and all the names start with the akshara ल. Hence the forms are called the ten "lakaras" (Even though two of the forms do not strictly start with ल, the term लकाराः applies)

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| 1. | लट् | Present tense |
| 2. | लङ् | Past tense - imperfect |
| 3. | लुङ् | Past tense - aorist |
| 4. | लिट् | Past tense - perfect |
| 5. | लृट् | Future tense - likely |
| 6. | लृट् | Future tense - certain |
| 7. | लृङ् | Conditional mood |
| 8. | विधिलिङ् | Potential mood |
| 9. | आशीर्लिङ् | Benedictive mood |
| 10. | लोट् | Imperative mood |

It may be noted that five of the lakaras end in ट् and the remaining five in ङ्. One more Lakara is known to be seen in Vedic texts. It is known as लेट्.

It must also be remembered that verbs in Sanskrit belong to two categories depending on whether the activity specified in the verb applies to the person himself or whether it applies to someone other than the subject of the verb.

Verbs referring to the activity for the self are said to be "Atmanepada" आत्मनेपद verbs.

Verbs referring to the activity for others are said to be "Parasmaipada" परस्मैपद verbs.

Verbs which can take both forms are known as "Ubhayapada" उभयपद verbs.

Each verb in Sanskrit can be traced to a root which we may refer to as the root form of the verb. There are many instances of verbs being derived from two different forms of a root. The form of the root used in deriving the verb will depend on the tense.

Forms of the verb for the different tenses and moods are obtained by adding suffixes or prefixes or both to the root form and adding an infix as well. So we may say that the general form of any "lakara" is

(prefix) + root form + infix + suffix

The parenthesis indicates that the prefix is not present in all the forms.

The infix is generally referred to as the conjugational sign. The form of the infix is dependent on the root form as well as person. In Sanskrit, the aksharas in the infix are termed as विकरणप्रत्ययः and those in the suffix are called तिङ्प्रत्ययः . The root form is known as धातु .

The suffix is referred to as the verbal termination sign. The form of the suffix depends on the lakara and we can apply some rules to arrive at the suffixes. For each of the lakaras, nine suffixes will have to be remembered. Three persons and three numbers for each person make up the nine.

It may be borne in mind that the verbal termination signs also depend on the type of the verb, i.e., "Atmanepada" or "Parasmaipada".

We have seen in lesson 3 the conjugations of the verb in the present tense. Later in this lesson we shall study the conjugations for the other tenses and moods. These will be covered in independent sections.

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Past tense (simple past tense):

The form considered here is लङ्

As seen in the introduction, the formation of the verb may be specified through a formula.

(prefix) + verb root + infix + suffix

The infix is based on the root and the person while the suffix, referred to as the verb termination, depends on the tense or the mood.

For the simple past tense, अ is the prefix. The terminations are as follows. These apply for verbs in "parasmaipada".

Per.	Sing.	Dual	Pl.
III.	त्	तां	अन्
II.	सू	तं	त
I.	अं	व	म

Applying the formula the forms of a verb will be obtained as

III Sing.	अ+vr+अ+त्
III Dual	अ+vr+अ+ताम्
III Pl.	अ+vr+अ+अन्
II Sing.	अ+vr+अ+सू
II Dual	अ+vr+अ+तम्
II Pl.	अ+vr+अ+त
I Sing.	अ+vr+आ+अं
I Dual	अ+vr+आ+व
I Pl.	अ+vr+आ+म

Now for the forms (past tense) of the verb गच्छति.

The root form for the verb is गच्छ्

The infix corresponding to the root गच्छ् is also अ for second and third person but आ for first person.

Per.	Sing.	Dual	Pl.
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III.	अगच्छत् He went	अगच्छतां They two went	अगच्छन् They went
II.	अगच्छः You went	अगच्छतं You two went	अगच्छत You went
I.	अगच्छं I went	अगच्छाव We two went	अगच्छाम We went

The discerning reader would want to know why in the case of the second person singular, there is no conformity with the indicated termination सू or why differences are seen in applying Sandhi rules?

It must be remembered that there are specific grammar rules in respect of how sounds are modified when suffixes are added. Typically, the suffix सू, when added to a noun or verb root, becomes a visarg. We will not dwell on this much, as this is beyond the scope of our current lessons.

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Future Tense- भविष्यत्कालः

As seen in the introduction, Future Tense may express something that is certainly going to happen (लृट्) or express something that may happen(लृट्).

Of these two, लृट् is seen in frequent use.

The infix for future tense is स्य. This infix changes its form to इष्य when applied to some roots. In some cases it may become ष्य. There is no direct rule or formula which we can remember in respect of this infix. It will be necessary to commit to memory the forms for different verbs.

For many verbs, two root forms may be seen. For example,

गम् , गच्छ् are the two root forms given for गच्छति.

Likewise,

पा , पिब् for पिबति and

स्था , तिष् for तिष्ठति .

The form of the verb for future tense will be based on the first root where two roots are specified.

As seen earlier, the second form of the root will be used in generating the verb in present tense, past tense and imperative mood.

Let us look at the terminations for future tense.

The infix and the tense terminations are combined together and shown here.

The table applies to verbs in "parasmaipada"

Per.	Sing.	Dual	Pl.
III	ष्यति	ष्यतः	ष्यन्ति
II	ष्यसि	ष्यथः	ष्यथ
I	ष्यामि	ष्यावः	ष्यामः

Now for the forms of the verb गच्छति in future tense.

III	गमिष्यति He will go	गमिष्यतः They two will go	गमिष्यन्ति They will go
II	गमिष्यसि You will go	गमिष्यथः You two will go	गमिष्यथ You will go
I	गमिष्यामि I will go	गमिष्यावः We two will go	गमिष्यामः We will go

The forms for पिबति. Please note that the form of the root that is taken is पा .

III	पास्यति He will drink	पास्यतः They two will drink	पास्यन्ति They will drink
II	पास्यसि You will	पास्यथः You (two)	पास्यथ You will

	drink	will drink	drink
I	पास्यामि	पास्यावः	पास्यामः
	I will drink	We (two) will drink	We will drink

The student would have observed by now that he/she will have to remember the root forms for many verbs to be able to correctly form the verbs. Panini, the foremost among Grammarians, had listed about 1950 root forms for Sanskrit. Surprisingly, knowledge of just about 300 of the root forms will be adequate for understanding Sanskrit texts.

If you are curious as to what these 300 are, you may have to wait for advanced lessons to be put up in these pages! This is a big task and we would like to know if you are interested. Send us a note.

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Summary of root terminations and verbal terminations for different tenses and moods.

The tables given below may be used as a basic reference for determining the forms of the verbs in different tenses. The student is reminded that the table is given only as a reference and the terminations cannot be blindly applied to a root form. It will be necessary to remember the root forms for many verbs.

Terminations for the present Tense

	परस्मैपद	आत्मनेपद
III	ति तः अन्ति	ते इते अन्ते
II	सि थः थ	से इथे ध्वे
I	मि वः मः	इ वहे महे

Terminations for the Past (imperfect) tense

III	त् ताम् अन्	त इतां अन्त
II	सू तम् त	थाः इथां ध्वम्

I अम् व म इ वहि महि

Terminations for the Future Tense

III	ष्यति ष्यतः ष्यन्ति	ष्यते ष्येते ष्यन्ते
II	ष्यसि ष्यथः ष्यथ	ष्यसे ष्यथे ष्यध्वे
I	ष्यामि ष्यावः ष्यामः	ष्ये ष्यावहे ष्यामहे

In case of the Future Tense, we have already seen that the general termination is स्य. In some verbs, स्य changes to ष्य and also takes इ in the beginning of the termination. The form shown above may be interpreted in the light of this observation.

Terminations for the Imperative Mood

III	तु तां अन्तु	तां इतां अन्तां
II	तात् तं त	स्व इथां ध्वम्
I	आनि आव आम्	ऐ आवहै आमहै

Terminations for the Potential Mood

III	ईत् ईताम् ईयुः	ईत ईयातां ईरन्
II	ईः ईतम् ईत	ईथाः ईयाथां ईध्वं
I	ईयं ईव ईम	ईय ईवहि ईमहि