

## SANSKRIT GRAMMAR–2

### THE SANSKRIT VERB: AN OVERVIEW

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The Sanskrit Verb refers here to a finite verb or “action word” (*kriyā-pada*) limited by person, number, tense, mode, and voice.

- I. Person (*puruṣaḥ*)
  - A. First person (*prathama-puruṣaḥ*) “he, she, it, they” (equivalent to English third person).
  - B. Second (Middle) person (*madhyama-puruṣaḥ*): “you”
  - C. Last person (*uttama-puruṣaḥ*): “I, We”
- II. Number (*vacanam*)
  - A. Singular (*eka-vacanam*)
  - B. Dual (*dvi-vacanam*)
  - C. Plural (*bahu-vacanam* or *aneka-vacanam*)
- III. Tense
  - A. Present
  - B. Imperfect
  - C. Aorist
  - D. Perfect
  - E. First Future (Sibilant Future, Simple Future)
  - F. Second Future (Periphrastic Future)
  - I. Conditional
- IV. Mode
  - A. Indicative
  - B. Optative
  - C. Imperative
  - D. Subjunctive
  - E. Precative (Benedictive)

Not all of the tenses and modes are common in Classical Sanskrit. They are grouped according to time (*kāla-*), with the Present Tense

possessing the indicative, imperative, optative , and the less common subjunctive. The Perfect Tense only has the indicative mode in Classical Sanskrit. The Aorist Tense, a rare tense, does have beside the indicative mode a still rarer precative or benedictive, which is a form of optative used in blessing (“May he be blessed”).

## V. Voice

- |           |                       |
|-----------|-----------------------|
| A. Active | <i>parasmai-padam</i> |
| B. Middle | <i>ātmane-padam</i>   |

## VI. Tenses and Modes

### A. Tenses

#### 1. Past (*bhūta-kāla-*)

- a. Imperfect
- b. Perfect
- c. Aorist

These tenses may be used as simple preterits or past tenses. As such they are equivalent and may be used interchangeably, all referring to remote past, recent past, and actions which have occurred once, repeatedly, or continuously. It is the context that determines how the preterit shall be used.

In the older language (Vedic), the tenses were distinct. the **imperfect** expresses simple past time, referring to an event that has recently taken place but before the present time. It is the past tense of narration and may denote an action past and continuing.

The **perfect** may refer to an event in the more remote past, unperceived by the narrator.

The **aorist** refers to a past event that is completed with reference to the present. The event described may have taken place prior to or during the current day. It is usually translated as the equivalent to a present perfect in English.

#### 2. Present (*vartamāna-kāla-*)

The **present** tense, besides expressing a present event, also expresses immediate futurity, the “historical” present (in narration), as well as the immediate past.

#### 3. Future (*bhaviṣyat-kāla-*)

The **sibilant future tense (simple future; first future)** expresses indefinite futurity. The **periphrastic future (second future)** refers to a definite future time when an event will take place. It is an event that will not occur during the course of the current day (and so is called *anadyatana-*). If the two futures are to be compared, the first future is more proximate, the second more remote.

4. The Conditional: a rare tense that is in form an imperfect of the future. It represents a hypothetical outcome and may also appear in the “if” clause (the protasis): *su-vṛṣṭiś ced abhaviṣyad durbhikṣaṃ nâbhaviṣyat* “If there had been abundant rain, there would have been no famine.”

## B. Modes

1. Indicative: This mood represents factuality or narration . It is the default mode so to speak. For instance, when Pānini identifies the personal endings of the present tense as *lat*, the indicative mode is included.

2. Imperative: Command

3. Optative: Exhortation, entreaty, wish

4. Subjunctive: This is a rarely occurring form, a relic of which appears in the *uttama-puruṣa-* imperative. The comparison with the imperative and optative is one that it stands somewhere between these two modes: *śataṃ jīva śaradaḥ* (impv. *jīva*: “live a hundred autumns”) ; *adya jīvāni* (subj. *jīvāni*: “let me live this day”); *jīvema śaradāṃ śatāni* (opt. *jīvema*: “may we live a hundreds autumns”).

5. Benedictive or Precative: a rare mode found in the aorist. It is an optative of blessing: *kṛtārtho bhūyāsam* “may I become successful” or *sarvam āyur jīvyāsam* “may I live a complete life span.”