

Lesson 3

Basic Nouns

Nouns in sanskrit have 7 cases:

- **Nominative** - mainly for the subject of verb
- **Accusative** - the direct object of verb
- **Instrumental** - denotes 'agency' such as 'by' or 'with'
- **Dative** - for indirect object such as 'to' or 'for'
- **Ablative** - 'from which' or often used as 'compared to'
- **Genitive** - denotes possession such as 'of'
- **Locative** - denotes 'place' such as 'in', 'on', 'at', 'among' etc

There is, of course, a '**vocative**' case also. This is used for directly addressing someone or something as in, *Bhoh Deva!* 'O god!' or हे राम 'Hey Rama!'.

Declension of deva 'god' - a masculine noun			
	Singular	Dual	Plural
Nominative	देवः	देवौ	देवाः
Accusative	देवम्	देवौ	देवान्
Instrumental	देवेन	देवाभ्याम्	देवैः
Dative	देवाय	देवाभ्याम्	देवेभ्यः
Ablative	देवात्	देवाभ्याम्	देवेभ्यः
Genitive	देवस्य	देवयोः	देवानाम्
Locative	देवे	देवयोः	देवेषु
Vocative	देव	देवौ	देवाः

It is a good idea to learn this table off by heart. You will benefit quite a lot by recognising the endings that define the case of the noun.

Some examples of the use of cases of the noun follow. These are all singular except for the locative example.

Nominative

देवः - The god (as subject of verb)

देव स्मरति - The god remembers

Accusative

देवम् - The god (as object of verb)

सह देवम् पश्यति - He sees the god

Instrumental

देवेन - The god as agent or instrument

सह देवेन गच्छति - He goes with the god

Dative

देवाय - The god as indirect object of verb

सह देवाय अर्पणम् करोति - He makes an offering to the god

Ablative

देवात्- From the god

देवात् आशीर्वाद अस्ति- It is a blessing from the god

Genitive

देवस्य - Of the god

देवस्य तेजस् - Splendour of the god

Locative

देवेषु- Amongst the gods (plural)

देवेषु नरो - Man amongst gods

योध कुरुक्षेत्रे मृत्यते - The warrior (yodha) dies at Kurukshetra

For more details regarding the use of nouns please check out the examples at learnsanskrit.org

Declension of phalam 'fruit' - a neuter noun			
	Singular	Dual	Plural
Nominative	फलम्	फले	फलानि
Accusative	फलम्	फले	फलानि
Instrumental	फलेन	फलाभ्याम्	फलैः
Dative	फलाय	फलाभ्याम्	फलेभ्यः
Ablative	फलात्	फलाभ्याम्	फलेभ्यः
Genitive	फलस्य	फलयोः	फलानाम्
Locative	फले	फलयोः	फलेषु

No need for the vocative of phalam. How many people talk to fruit? In case you do, just use the nominative case (but drop the final 'm' for the singular).

तत् फलम् or तद् फलम् - 'that is a fruit' or 'that is the fruit'

पक्वान्याम्रफलानि रुचिरानि भवन्ति - ripe mangos become juicy and sweet.

Let's break that down. The first three words are fused by sandhi.

पक्व means 'ripe', आम्रः 'mango', फलः 'fruit', and रुचिर् 'sweet'

In sanskrit the adjective will follow the same declension as the noun it qualifies. Hence, pakvāni and ruchirāni follow āmrāphalāni 'mango fruits'. Of course bhavanti means 'they become'.

फलानामाहारः सात्त्विकः पथ्यश्च - phalānāmāhārah sāttvikah pathyaścha

A diet (āhāra) of fruits is both sattvic (pure) and beneficial. पथ्य - 'wholesome', 'beneficial'

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन - karmaṇyevādhikāraṣte mā phaleṣu kadāchana

'Performing actions is your right, but not in the fruits thereof at any time'. Again **sandhi** is applied extensively in this verse (of the Gita), so we can break down the individual words as **karmani** (actions), **eva** (actually, indeed), **adhikār** (authority, right), **te** (your). In addition, **mā** is used for 'not', **phaleṣu** 'amongst the fruits' and **kadāchana** 'at any time' (more about this type of construct later).

Declension of strii 'woman' - a feminine noun			
	Singular	Dual	Plural
Nominative	स्त्री	स्त्रियौ	स्त्रियः
Accusative	स्त्रीम्	स्त्रियौ	स्त्रीः
Instrumental	स्त्रिया	स्त्रीभ्याम्	स्त्रीभिः
Dative	स्त्रियै	स्त्रीभ्याम्	स्त्रीभ्यः
Ablative	स्त्रियाः	स्त्रीभ्याम्	स्त्रीभ्यः
Genitive	स्त्रियाः	स्त्रीयोः	स्त्रीनाम्
Locative	स्त्रियाम्	स्त्रीयोः	स्त्रीषु

Remember 'strii' is formed from स् + त्र + ि = स्त्री

स्त्रीषु दुष्टासु वाष्णेय जायते वर्णसङ्करः - strīṣu duṣṭāsu vārṣṇeya jāyate varṇaśankarah

(When there is) corruption amongst women, there arises confusion of castes, O Varshney

Interrogatives

Sanskrit has a similar range of **interrogative pronouns** to English, normally beginning with the letter 'k'. Following are some of the most commonly used:

- **kadā** - when?
- **kutra** - where?
- **kutah** - from what?
- **kathā** - how?
- **kim** - what? (neuter)

सः कदा वदति - sah kadā vadati ? When does he speak?

सः कुत्र गच्छति - sah kutra gacchati ? Where does he go?

कुतस्त्वा कश्मलमिदं - kutastvā kaśmalamidam ? (with the usual sandhi)

'From what (where) has come this despair'?

कुतः from what?, त्वा 'you', कश्मल 'despair', इदं 'this'

कथं भीष्मं इषुभिः प्रतियोत्स्यामि - katham Bheeshmam ishubhih pratiyotsyāmi ?

How will I fight against Bheeshma with arrows ?

कथ how?, इषुभिः 'with arrows', प्रतियोत्स्यामि 'I will fight against' (first person singular, future tense of the verb 'yuddh' with the prefix 'prati' implying 'against').

कुरुक्षेत्रे किमकुर्वत संजय - At Kurukshetra, what happened Sanjay?

किम् 'what?', अकुर्वत 'was done', 'happened' (past perfect tense, I believe).

There are other interrogative pronouns such as those based upon the personal pronouns eg **kah** 'who'? For an in depth analysis of these, please refer to examples at **learnsanskrit.org**