भाषासु मुख्या मधुरा दिव्या गीर्वाणभारती

Amongst languages, the most important, the most sweet, the most divine is Sanskrit.

Introduction to Sanskrit Grammar (व्याकरणम्)

The language Sanskrit has immense significance in our tradition. Starting from the Vedas, which form the bedrock of our culture and civilization, it has been the primary vehicle for the expression of ideas, knowledge etc. through the ages. Thus an understanding of Sanskrit language is the key to unlocking the treasures that lay buried in our scriptures. "वेदस्य मुखं व्याकरणम्" – व्याकरणम् is the face of the वेद-पुरुष:। Learning Sanskrit grammar is the best bet for us to be able to read, understand and appreciate the original works of our tradition, be it the रामायणम् of the sage वाल्मीकि: or the works of शङ्कराचार्य:।

The grammar of Sanskrit language has been originally composed by three sages – मुनित्रयम्. The first and foremost of these three is पाणिनि: (5th century B.C.). His Magnum Opus अष्टाध्यायी (group of eight chapters) is the primary source book of the grammatical tradition. There were other grammatical systems before and after that of पाणिनि:, but his work has gained such universal acceptance that it has completely obscured the others.

The uniqueness of संस्कृतम् is that it uses a mere 2200 verbal roots (धातु) to generate an entire vocalbury of million owf words. Further, the verbal root that is the starting point of each derived word revaels the nature of the object that the word stands for. For example, the words शरीरम् and देहः both mean "body". The first is derived from the verbal root "शृ", to decay, to waste away. The etymological meaning of शरीरम् is thus "that which will waste away." The word देहः comes from the root "दिह्", to anoint; the word देहः means "that which one anoints."

No dictionary can hope to include all the words that can be formed from these roots, but all the words are formed by the addition of prefixes and suffixes according to well defined rules. Compound formation is another way of custom-designing words from small structural units. Anyone who knows the grammar of संस्कृतम् can construct new words by these methods. Thus any writing in संस्कृतम् is refreshing, for it is a constant intellectual challenge to discover the workings of the author's mind!

Sandhi (सन्धि), Euphonic Combination Rules

When two sounds come together in संस्कृतम्, they combine with one another according to well–defined set of rules called euphonic combination, or सन्धि rules. The guiding principle behind सन्धि rules is maintenance of the point of articulation of the letter and if possible, the effort needed to make the sounds (aspirate or nonaspirate). For example, when the vowel अ and the vowel इ come together, the सन्धि rule mandates a substitute ए in the place of both vowels. This is logical since the अ and इ are gutteral and palatal, respectively, and the diphthong ए is of gutteral-palatel origin.

Consonants as well as vowels form सन्धि. Thus there are सन्धि rules pertaing to both. A special subset of consonant सन्धि rules as known as विसर्ग-सन्धि। Since सन्धि is mandated in all the written work, a clear

understanding of the principles is necessary. A text which appears quite threatening will reveal itself as composed of simple words once the सन्धि is broken.

Before going further into the features of the language, a few technical terms must be introduced. Almost all words in संस्कृतम् are formed from set of dhātus (धातुः), verbal roots. (Other meanings of the word are "an elementary substance", and "an ore of the metal"). From these basic units all words are derived by adding prefixes and suffixes. Both types of affixes are called प्रत्यायः।

The unit to which affixes are added is called a stem (अङ्ग); Thus a धातुः is called a stem when some affix is added to it. A word , पद, is that unit to which a conjugational or a declensional affix has been added. Thus , if one adds the third person, present tense, singular, affix to a धातुः , the धातुः become an अङ्गः, and the product formed by the addition of the affix is called a पदम्।

- Example1: When the present tense, third person singular conjugational affix ति is added to the धातुः √पठ् (to read), the word "पठति" meaning "reads" is formed.
  पठ् + अ + तिप् = पठति (Here "अ" is the class affix)
  verbal stem (अङ्गः) + conjugational affix = क्रियापदम् (word denoting action)

- Example2: Declensional affixes are added to प्रातिपदिकम् (nominal stem)। When the first case, singular declensional affix स् is added to the प्रातिपदिकम् राम, the word, "रामः" is formed.
  राम + स् = रामः (The affix स् becomes the विसर्गः after the application of number of rules)
  nominal stem (प्रातिपदिकम्) + declensional affix =नामपदम्

Conjugational Affixes

There are 2200 verbal roots in संस्कृतम्। Verb forms in ten tenses and four moods (present, past not pertaining to the day of action, general past, remote past, general future, future not pertaining to the day of action make the six tenses; imperative, potential, benedictive and conditional constitute the four moods) are derived from these roots by the addition of the appropriate tense or mood affixes.

The roots are divided unequally in ten conjugations called गणः।
The roots in a particular गणः takes an affix that is specific to that गणः this affix is called the गणविकरणम् (गण, class or group; विकरणम्, modifier). This गणविकरणम्, गणः affix is added to the root before conjugational affixes are added. The set of nine affixes used in the Present tense in all ten conjugations is given below:

	एकवचनम्(Singular)	द्विवचनम् (Dual)	बहुवचनम (Plural)
उत्तमपुरुषः (First Person)	मि	वः	मः
मध्यमपुरुषः (Second Person)	सि	थः	थ
प्रथमपुरुषः (Third Person)	ति	तः	अन्ति

Forms in the Present Tense of the **धातुः पठ्** (to read)

	एकवचनम्(Singular)	द्विवचनम् (Dual)	बहुवचनम (Plural)
उत्तमपुरुषः (First Person)	पठामि (I read)	पठावः (We two read)	पठामः (We all read)
मध्यमपुरुषः(Second Person)	पठसि (You read)	पठथः (You two read)	पठथ (You all read)
प्रथमपुरुषः (Third Person)	पठति (He,She reads)	पठतः (They two read)	पठन्ति (They all read)

Forms in the Present Tense of the **धातुः गम्** (to go) **धातुः गम्** is an irregular **root and** becomes गच्छ्

	एकवचनम्	द्विवचनम्	बहुवचनम्
उत्तमपुरुषः	गच्छामि (I go)	गच्छावः (We two go)	गच्छामः (We all go)
मध्यमपुरुषः	गच्छसि (You go)	गच्छथः (You two go)	गच्छथ (You all go)
प्रथमपुरुषः	गच्छति (He, She goes)	गच्छतः (They two go)	गच्छन्ति (They all go)

Forms in the Present Tense of the **धातुः खाद्** (to eat)

	एकवचनम्	द्विवचनम्	बहुवचनम्
उत्तमपुरुषः	खादामि(I eat)	खादावः (We two eat)	खादामः (We all eat)
मध्यमपुरुषः	खादसि (You eat)	खादथः (You two go)	खादथ (You all eat)
प्रथमपुरुषः	खादति (He, She eats)	खादतः (They two eat)	खादन्ति (They all eat)

Declensional Affixes

Nouns, pronouns, adjectives are made useful words by the addition of declensional affixes. What is achieved in English by syntax or by the use of prepositions is accomplished in संस्कृतम् by these declensional affixes. In the English sentence "James saw John in the garden," we understand from the word order that James saw, an John is the one who was seen. The preposition "in" tells us where John was seen. In संस्कृतम् these relationships would be established by the use of affixes added to the words for "James", "John" and "garden". The words could appear in any order, and the preposition would not appear at all.

Case	विभक्तिः	Meaning/Preposition
Nominative (First)	प्रथमा	Subject(in a Sentence)
Accusative (Second)	द्वितीया	Object (to)
Instrumental (Third)	तृतीया	By, With
Dative (Fourth)	चतुर्थी	For, To
Ablative (Fifth)	पञ्चमी	From, Out of, Than
Genitive (Sixth)	षष्ठी	Of, Among, Belong to
Locative (Seventh)	ससमी	On, In, At, Among
Vocative (Eighth)	सम्बोधन	(Oh) address a person or thing

Declension of प्रातिपदिकम् राम (अकारन्तः ("अ" ending Masculine(M) शब्दः)

विभक्तिः	एकवचनम्	द्विवचनम्	बहुवचनम
प्रथमा	रामः	रामौ	रामाः
द्वितीया	रामम्	रामौ	रामान्
तृतीया	रामेण	रामाभ्याम्	रामैः
चतुर्थी	रामाय	रामाभ्याम्	रामेभ्यः
पञ्चमी	रामात्	रामाभ्याम्	रामेभ्यः
षष्ठी	रामस्य	रामयोः	रामाणाम्
ससमी	रामे	रामयोः	रामेषु
सम्बोधन	राम	रामौ	रामाः

Declension of प्रातिपदिकम् वन (अकारान्तः "अ" ending Neuter(N) शब्दः)

विभक्तिः	एकवचनम्	द्विवचनम्	बहुवचनम
प्रथमा	वनम्	वने	वनानि
द्वितीया	वनम्	वने	वनानि

Declension of प्रातिपदिकम् सीता (आकारान्तः "आ" ending Feminine(F) शब्दः)

विभक्तिः	एकवचनम्	द्विवचनम्	बहुवचनम
प्रथमा	सीता	सीते	सीताः
द्वितीया	सीताम्	सीते	सीताः

Examples:

The verb agrees with its subject in person and number	
बालः पतति । A boy falls. (प्रातिपदिकम् "बाल" (M) declined as बालः in प्रथमा विभक्ति एकवचनम्। The verb "पतति" is derived from the धातुः "पत्" meaning "to fall" conjugated in प्रथमपुरुषः एकवचनम्।)	पतामि ।। I fall . The verb "पतामि" is derived from the धातुः "पत्" meaning "to fall" conjugated in उत्तमपुरुषः एकवचनम्।)
बालौ पततः । Two boys fall. (प्रातिपदिकम् "बाल"(M) declined as बालौ in प्रथमा विभक्ति द्विवचनम्। The verb "पततः" is conjugated in प्रथमपुरुषः द्विवचनम्।)	पतसि। You fall. The verb "पतसि" is derived from the धातुः "पत्" meaning "to fall" conjugated in मध्यमपुरुषः एकवचनम्।)
बालाः पतन्ति । Boys fall. (प्रातिपदिकम् "बाल" (M) is declined as बालाः in प्रथमा विभक्ति बहुवचनम्। The verb "पतन्ति" is conjugated in प्रथमपुरुषः बहुवचनम्।)	पठावः। We two read. The verb "पठावः" is derived from the धातुः "पठ्" meaning "to read" conjugated in उत्तमपुरुषः द्विवचनम्।)
माधवः कूपम् खनति। Madhava digs a well. (प्रातिपदिकम् "माधव" (M) is declined as माधवः in प्रथमा विभक्ति एकवचनम् । The verb खनति" is derived from the धातुः "खन्" meaning "to dig" is conjugated in प्रथमपुरुषः एकवचनम्। प्रातिपदिकम् "कूप(N)" is declined as कूपम् in द्वितीया विभक्ति एकवचनम्	वदथ । You all speak. The verb "वदथ" is derived from the धातुः "वद्" meaning "to speak" conjugated in मध्यमपुरुषः बहुवचनम्।)
माधवः कूपौ खनति। Madhava digs two wells. (प्रातिपदिकम् "माधव" (M) is declined in प्रथमा विभक्ति एकवचनम् । The verb खनति" is conjugated in प्रथमपुरुषः एकवचनम्। प्रातिपदिकम् "कूप(N)" is declined as कूपौ in द्वितीया विभक्ति द्विवचनम् ।	वनम् गच्छामः। We all go to the forest. (प्रातिपदिकम् "वन (N)" is declined in द्वितीया विभक्ति एकवचनम् । The verb is "गच्छामः" derived from the irregular धातुः "गम्" conjugated in उत्तमपुरुषः बहुवचनम्।
माधवः कूपान् खनति। Madhava dig wells. (प्रातिपदिकम् "माधव (M)" is declined in प्रथमा विभक्ति एकवचनम् (M)। The	पतथः । You two fall. The verb "पतथः" is derived from the धातुः "पत्" meaning "to fall" conjugated

verb is खनति" is conjugated in प्रथमपुरुषः एकवचनम्। प्रातिपदिकम् "कूप(N)" is declined as कूपान् in द्वितीया विभक्ति बहुवचनम्	in मध्यमपुरुषः द्विवचनम्।)

Some more examples:

1. दासः कूपम् गच्छति । The servant goes to the well.

दासः The servant

गच्छति goes

कूपम् to the well

2. जनकः पुत्रान् गच्छति । The father goes to the sons.

प्रातिपदिकम् जनक (M) for father and प्रातिपदिकम् पुत्र (M) for son.

जनकः The father

गच्छति goes

पुत्रान् to the sons

3. ईश्वरः रक्षति । The God protects.

धातुः रक्ष् (to protect)

ईश्वरः The God

रक्षति protects.

4. गजाः गच्छन्ति। The elephants go.

प्रातिपदिकम् गज (M) for elephants.

गजाः The elephants

गच्छन्ति go

5. छात्रः पाठशालाम् गच्छति । The student goes to school.

प्रातिपदिकम् छात्र (M) for student and प्रातिपदिकम् पाठशाला (F) for school.

छात्रः The student

गच्छति goes

पाठशालाम् to school.