

## Chapter 2

This lesson is packed with more content than the majority of them. It has four parts:

- A. the rules for the *guṇa* changes of vowels;
- B. changes that may occur in a verb as it transitions from root to stem to inflected form;
- C. some easy forms to introduce the declension of nouns.
- D. some rules for the changes that occur when some words sit side by side. These are often call the “euphonic” rules (viz. rules that make the language sound better by facilitating the flow), and there will be quite a few of such rules before this course is done.

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In order to keep track of the rules, you need to know Perry’s categories. So, here we are at a point where we do need to dip into Perry’s introduction. The sooner you know the alphabet and its categories, the easier it will be to understand the rules. The following terms are now important:

1. **Surd**: a “hard” consonant that starts or stops the vowel sound abruptly. (**k, c, ṭ, t, p**)  
**Aspirated surd**: the same consonants with a little more breath. (**kh, ch, ṭh, th, ph**)
2. **Sonant**: a “soft” consonant that starts or stops the vowel sound over a slightly longer duration. (**g, j, ḍ, d, b**)  
**Aspirated sonant**: the same consonants with a little more breath. (**gh, jh, ḍh, dh, bh**)
3. **Heavy syllable**: A syllable that falls into one of two categories. Either:
  - (a) it contains a long vowel, or
  - (b) it has a short vowel that is followed by two or more consonants.
4. **Light syllable**: By default, a syllable that contains a short vowel and is followed by one consonant only.
5. **Guṇa**: A standard change in vowels under conditions to be specified below.

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### A. Guṇa Sounds and their Derivations.

There is clearly no guṇa in English, but think about how some so-called strong verbs in English change their vowels when they’re put into the past tense. Here is one example: ride to rode, write to wrote, shine to shone, whine to .... oops! That last one doesn’t work. “Whine” is a “weak verb,” and its past tense is “whined.”

Here are the guṇa changes in vowels. Note that there is no real guṇa for अ or आ. अ remains

अ, and आ remains आ. I'm listing them here, however, because they do undergo a minor change in a second transformation, which we'll discuss later.

Original		Guṇa
अ आ (a, ā)	→	अ आ (a, ā)
ई इ (i, ī)	→	ए (e)
उ ऊ (u, ū)	→	ओ (o)
ऋ ṛ	→	अर (ar)

## B. From Root to Stem to Inflected Form

You have already seen that in Sanskrit any two adjacent consonants will blend into a combination form. We have also already encountered the *visarga*, which turns a final “s” or “r” of a word into an aspiration. That’s just the beginning, though. Staying within the only class of verbs we have dabbled with so far (unaccented “a”), we can observe some interesting transformations between the root of a word and its journey to become a stem.

You see a root and inspect it. There are two questions you must ask.

- Does it end in a vowel?
- Is the last syllable a “light” one (see above for the meaning of the term)?

If the answer is “yes” to **either** question, the vowel must be **guṇated** in order to form the stem.

The table below shows five of Perry’s representative examples.

Changes within the Root		
जि ji	→	जे je
नी nī	→	ने ne
भू bhu	→	भो bho
द्रु drū	→	द्रो dro
स्मृ smṛ	→	स्मर् smar

**The new, guṇated, forms are not yet the stems.** After all, this is the “a” conjugation, and you won’t have the right stems until you’ve added an “a” to the roots. Sometimes it’s as simple as that.

For example, in the last lesson we took the root, √pat, added the “a” to make the stem **pata**, and supplied the proper endings: e.g., **patati**. It can be just as easy with some guṇated roots. √smṛ turns into **smar**, and then the stem becomes **smara**. Thus, the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular is **smarati**.

However, sometimes in the process of adding the “a” there will be further transformations. Let me illustrate. In the top row of the table above, we have taken the **root** √ji (“to conquer”) and changed it into its **guṇa form**: **je**. Now, to get the right ending for the stem, we need to **add the all-important “a,”** and you might think that, consequently, the stem is “jea.” But it’s a little more complex than that. The stem is **jaya**.

Sanskrit does not like two vowels cozying up together (nor, for that matter, a repetition of the same vowel). So, it prefers to **insert a semivowel**, which, in the process changes the original vowel as well. In the case of an ending in **e**, the stem ending is “**aya**.”

We go from √ji to **je** to **jaya** to **jayati** (he conquers).

If the guṇated root ends in an **o**, the stem ends with “**ava**.” We go from √bhū to **bho** to **bhava** to **bhavati** (he exists).

This table shows some roots, the guṇated roots, the construction of the stem by adding “a” to the root, and the actual stem, which is ready to take on a grammatical workload.

From Root to Verb					
Root	Guṇa	Guṇa + a	Usable Stem*	3rd p. sing.	Translation
जि <i>ji</i>	जे <i>je</i>	जे + अ <i>je + a</i>	जय <i>jaya</i>	जयति <i>jayati</i>	conquer, he conquers
नी <i>nī</i>	ने <i>ne</i>	ने + अ <i>ne + a</i>	नय <i>naya</i>	नयति <i>nayati</i>	lead, she leads
भू <i>bhū</i>	भो <i>bho</i>	भो + अ <i>bho + a</i>	भव <i>bhava</i>	भवति <i>bhavati</i>	exist, it exists
ड्रु <i>drū</i>	द्रो <i>dro</i>	द्रो + अ <i>dro + a</i>	द्रव <i>drava</i>	द्रवति <i>dravati</i>	run, he runs
स्मृ <i>smṛ</i>	स्मर् <i>smar</i>	स्मर् + अ <i>smar</i>	स्मर <i>smara</i>	स्मरति <i>smarati</i>	remember, she remembers

Some verbs of the “a” conjugation manifest some unusual forms that are not based on guṇas. Be sure to look at all of Perry’s examples, which follow the same pattern as the one that I have singled out in the table below.

From Root to Verb					
Root	Altered Form	Alt. Form + a	Usable Stem*	3rd p. sing.	Translation
गम् <i>gam</i>	गच्छ् <i>gacch</i>	गच्छ् + अ <i>gacch + a</i>	गच्छ <i>gaccha</i>	गच्छति <i>gacchati</i>	go, it goes
यम् <i>yam</i>	यच्छ् <i>yacch</i>	यच्छ् + अ <i>yacch + a</i>	यच्छ <i>yaccha</i>	यच्छति <i>yacchati</i>	give, he gives
सद् <i>sad</i>	सीद् <i>sīd</i>	सीद् + अ <i>sīd + a</i>	सीद् <i>sīda</i>	सीदति <i>sīdati</i>	sit, she sits
गुह <i>guh</i>	गूह <i>gūh</i>	गूह + अ <i>gūh + a</i>	गूह <i>gūha</i>	गूहति <i>gūhati</i>	hide, it hides

स्था <i>sthā</i>	तिष्ठ् <i>tiṣṭ</i>	तिष्ठ् + अ <i>tiṣṭ + a</i>	तिष्ठ <i>tiṣṭa</i>	तिष्ठति <i>tiṣṭati</i>	stand, he stands
पा <i>pā</i>	पिब् <i>piv</i>	पिब् + अ <i>piv+a</i>	पिब <i>piva</i>	पिबति <i>pivati</i>	drink, she drinks
घ्रा <i>ghrā</i>	जिघ्र् <i>jighr</i>	जिघ्र् + अ <i>jighr + a</i>	जिघ्र <i>jighra</i>	जिघ्रति <i>jighrati</i>	smell, he smells

### So, how is anybody supposed to figure out when to apply the irregular forms?

You don't. You can't. However, when there are unusual forms, Perry mentions them, most of the time in his vocabulary list. So, as you memorize the verbs, you will also memorize the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular along with their roots. Then the pertinent information will be right there in your head to draw on as you need to.

### C. Introduction to Nouns, the “a”-Declension.

For some reason, when we talk about the changes in verbs, we use the term “conjugation,” whereas for nouns “declension” is the correct term. Like verbs, nouns have stems and the declensions are known by the final letter of the stem. Thus, the first declension that we'll look at has stems that end in a short “a.” Please note that Perry refers to nouns as “substantives.”

Since the verbs come in three different numbers—singular, dual, and plural—the same thing has to be true for nouns and pronouns. They have eight cases.

#### WHAT IS A CASE? A QUICK EXPLANATION FOR THE NEWCOMER

What is a “case”? Let me illustrate with what little remnant there is of different cases in modern English. We distinguish between “who” and “whom” or “I” and “me.” Alas, too often people get even such few differences wrong.

“Who” exemplifies the **subject case**, meaning that it is the right form to serve as the subject of a sentence.

Who is singing this melody?

Here is the man who will fix our stove.

Note that the second sentence consists two clauses, each with a subject and a verb: “the man is” and “who will fix.” In languages where there are more formal cases, the official name for the subject case is “**nominative**,” the “naming case.”

“Whom” is an example of the **object case** in English. In American colloquial English, it is often ignored. It may or may not take a preposition.

I don't know whom I can trust.

Whom are you so obviously flirting with?

I have not yet decided for whom I will vote.

I am happy for the person to whom the prize is given.

By whom was this book written?

There is no getting around the fact that we will frequently hear people say something like:

**Who** are you buying this for?

sometimes under the mistaken impression that “who” is the subject of the sentence, but it is not. The subject is “you” and the verb is “are.” “Whom” often is the construction we call an indirect object, the “receiver” of something, so to speak. (Technically, it’s in the **accusative** case.)

The situation with regard to “**I**” and “**me**” is similar. “**I**” is in the **subject case** and should be used for the subject of a sentence. “**Me**” represents the **object case**. Something like “He gave the ring to Frodo and **I**” is wrong. It should be “He gave the ring to Frodo and **me**.”

So, as I said, Sanskrit has eight cases, each one with singular, dual, and plural, making twenty-four forms of a noun for each class. Fortunately, for some forms there is little variation among the classes, and there are duplicate forms for several cases in a particular class, so once you see the patterns and repetitions, it’s not as intimidating as it may look right now. The “a”-declension

is found only among masculine and neuter nouns. I’m going to use **गज** (*gaja*), “elephant,” as my representative for the masculine gender. For this lesson we are only looking at three cases.

Case Name	Function	Singular	Dual	Plural
Nominative	Subject of a sentence.	गजस् ( <i>gajas</i> )	गजौ ( <i>gajau</i> )	गजास् ( <i>gajās</i> )
Accusative	Direct object of a sentence.	गजम् ( <i>gajam</i> )	गजौ ( <i>gajau</i> )	गजान् ( <i>gajān</i> )
Vocative	Direct address	गज ( <i>gaja</i> )	गजै ( <i>gajau</i> )	गजास् ( <i>gajās</i> )

In all declensions, the vocative in dual and plural will also be the same as the respective nominatives. Let’s look at what the neuter gender of the “a”-declension has to offer. We will see some patterns that may be of particular interest to anyone who has studied a bit of Latin or

Greek. My paradigm word will be **जल**, “water.”

Case	Singular	Dual	Plural
Nominative	जलम्	जले	जलानि

	( <i>jalām</i> )	( <i>jale</i> )	( <i>jalāni</i> )
<b>Accusative</b>	जलम् ( <i>jalām</i> )	जले ( <i>jale</i> )	जलानि ( <i>jalāni</i> )
<b>Vocative</b>	जल ( <i>jala</i> )	जले ( <i>jale</i> )	जलानि ( <i>jalāni</i> )

Every once in a while, we will come across endings in a form that will resemble something in Latin or Greek. For example, in the masculine paradigm, the singular accusative “-am” could conceivably remind someone of the Latin singular accusative in the first declension. We can speculate, to what extent this ending may be derived from their common IndoEuropean heritage. However, the most startling fact here is that in neuter the nominative and accusative are the same. This pattern pervades IndoEuropean languages ranging from the ancient Aryans on the South Asian subcontinent (as we see here) to, say, German, where the declensions take place for the most part in the article, not the noun.

I cannot overstate the importance of memorizing the conjugations and declensions. And everything else, I guess. Use whatever means you may have available. It may be hard work, but it keeps what follows from becoming impossible work. Be creative in how you memorize. The more passive you are in your method, the less will stick to you. Staring at a chart will probably not help you much. Reading it out loud is a little bit better. Making vocab cards and quizzing yourself without giving yourself a pass for wrong answers (“Oh yeah, that’s what I meant ...”) will take you quite a bit further. Make up funny rhythms, songs, dances, games. Involve as many senses as you can.

If you’ve been told that you’re an auditory or visual learner, that only means that one sense predominates. Use of multiple senses will always beat just one sense. If you’re intentional and committed, you will be surprised how quickly this very complex language will open itself up to you. But I must also add the caution not to set yourself unrealistic goals. Establish objectives for success and build on them rather than getting down on yourself for not setting a land and air speed record in, say, learning to read the Bhagavad Gita. As I said, if you get yourself into a hurry, what was potentially easy work will become hard, and what would have been hard becomes almost impossible. That’s something we should try to avoid. I would think.

#### D. “Euphonic” Combinations of Words

“Euphonic” is derived from a Greek word; it means that something has a good sound quality. It applies to those aspects of a language that aren’t necessary for its grammar per se, but add flow to its speech by removing unnecessary pauses and other potentially odd formations. A good analog in English is the use of “an” as the indefinite article rather than “a” prior to a vowel. “I saw **a** zebra, and I saw **an** antelope.” That’s a very small item compared to Sanskrit, but it’s at least in the same ballpark. The contractions we use in sentences, such as “that’s” and “it’s,”

though not a part of really formal English, fit into that pattern as well. When we speak, it's easier to say, "it's" rather than "it is." After a time, some patterns that originated as colloquial phrases may become an integral part of grammar.

Here we are going to look at what happens when a word that ends with a vowel is followed by a word that begins with a vowel. As I said above in the context of roots turning into stems, Sanskrit abhors double vowels—almost as much as nature abhors a vacuum. The following table gives some of the combinations and Perry's examples.

First Vowel	Second Vowel	Result	Example
अ or आ	अ or आ	आ	गता + अपि → गतापि
अ or आ	इ or ई	ए	गता + इति → गतेति
अ or आ	उ or ऊ	ऐ	गता + उत → गतोत
अ or आ	ऋ	अर्	महा + ऋषि → महर्षि
अ or आ	ए or ऐ	ऐ	गता + एव → गतएव
अ or आ	अे or औ	अै	गता + अेषधिः → गतौषतिः

Please do Exercise II on page 29 in Perry, *Sanskrit Primer*

### Sample Answers for Exercise II

1. They always remember the gods.
5. When do you two give fruits?
10. I smell the perfume now.
15. नरः क्षीरम् पिबति

20. ग्रमम् जवति नृपः
25. देवान वर्षन्ति

More than enough for now! Please [send me](#) your translations!