

Chapter 4

A. Masculine and Neuter Declensions in “i.”

We started with the “a” declension of nouns because it is the most common declension for Sanskrit nouns. Our next one is the “i” declension.

अग्नि (m.) “fire”

Case	Singular	Dual	Plural
Nom.	अग्निस्	अग्नी	अग्नयस्
	(<i>agnis</i>)	(<i>agnī</i>)	(<i>agnayas</i>)
Acc.	अग्निम्	अग्नी	अग्नीन्
	(<i>agnim</i>)	(<i>agnī</i>)	(<i>agnīn</i>)
Instr.	अग्निना	अग्निभ्याम्	अग्निभिस्
	(<i>agninā</i>)	(<i>agnibhyām</i>)	(<i>agnibhis</i>)
Dat.	अग्नाये	अग्निभ्याम्	अग्निभ्यिस्
	(<i>agnāye</i>)	(<i>agnibhyām</i>)	(<i>agnibhyas</i>)
Abl.	अग्नेस्	अग्निभ्याम्	अग्निभ्यिस्
	(<i>agnes</i>)	(<i>agnibhyām</i>)	(<i>agnibhyas</i>)
Gen.	अग्नेस्	अग्नयोस्	अग्नीनाम्
	(<i>agnes</i>)	(<i>agnyos</i>)	(<i>agnīnām</i>)
Loc.	अग्नौ	अग्नयोस्	अग्निषु
	(<i>agnau</i>)	(<i>agnyos</i>)	(<i>agniṣu</i>)
Voc.	अग्ने	अग्नी	अग्नयस्
	(<i>agne</i>)	(<i>agnī</i>)	(<i>agnayas</i>)

Agni is also the name of the name of the Vedic god of fire. The *...gn... root is not all that frequently found among modern IE languages, but it is preserved in the English language by way of Latin with such words as “to ignite,” “ignition,” etc.

Below is the table for the neuter word, वारि (vāri, “water”), the second word with that meaning for us. There is also a feminine “i”-declension. We’ll get to that one eventually.

(n.) वारि “water”

Case	Singular	Dual	Plural
Nom.	वारि	वारिणी	वारीणि
	(vāri)	(vāriṇī)	(vārīṇi)
Acc.	वारि	वारिणी	वारीणि
	(vāri)	(vāriṇī)	(vārīṇi)
Instr.	वारिणा	चारिभ्याम्	वारिभिस्
	(vāriṇā)	(vāribhyām)	(vāribhis)
Dat.	वारिणे	चारिभ्याम्	वारिभ्यस्
	(vāriṇe)	(vāribhyām)	(vāribhyas)
Abl.	वारिणस्	चारिभ्याम्	वारिभ्यस्
	(vāriṇas)	(vāribhyām)	(vāribhyas)
Gen.	वारिणस्	वारिणोस्	वारीणाम्
	(vāriṇas)	(vāriṇos)	(vārīṇām)
Loc.	वारिणि	वारिणोस्	वारिषु
	(vāriṇi)	(vāriṇos)	(vāriṣu)
Voc.	वारे	वारिणी	वारीणि
	(vāre)	(vāriṇī)	(vārīṇi)

You can see that the letter combination **v-ā-r-i-n-i** comes up seven times: in the locative singular, and in the nominative, accusative, and vocative in both dual and plural. But note that it is spelled differently in each column. In singular, the “i” is not lengthened (vāriṇi); in the dual version the ending is a long “i” (vāriṇī), and in the plural the first “i” is lengthened (vārīṇi).

The neuter “i”-declension displays the usual properties for any declension in most IE languages. The nominative and accusative forms are the same.

B. Hooked on Euphonics: “s” and “r.”

I will stick a summary table to the end of this discussion.

Rules for “s.” In the very first lesson we were already advised that if the letter “s” stands alone, e.g., at the end of a sentence, it is replaced by the visarga, which sounds like a soft “h.” But that doesn’t mean that in all other cases it is left alone. There are many occasions at which the “s” gets turned into an “r.” Don’t feel too sorry for it, though. There are also times when the “r” has to step aside and allow an “s” to fill its spot. It all depends on the word that follows it.

First of all, I need to bring up here that the division of consonants into “surds” and “sonants” also carries over into the semi-vowels and sibilants. Remember that the surds are letters that stop abruptly (k, ch, t, ṭ, and p, along with their aspirated counterparts), while sonants take a little longer (g, j, d, ḍ, and b, and their aspirated counterparts). Now I need to tell you that the semi-vowels (y, r, l, v) and sibilants (s, ṣ, and ś) also observe that distinction. Fortunately, it’s not too complicated.

All semivowels are sonants, and all sibilants are surds.

So, the aforementioned switch forwards or backwards between “s” and “r” can be seen as a substitution of a sonant for a surd, or, in the other direction, a surd for a sonant.

Okay then. “S” is a surd. When the “s” occurs at the end of an isolated word or at the end of a sentence, we write a visarga (◌ḥ). If the “s” is not at the end of a sentence, whether we change it or not depends on the word that follows.

1. If the next word begins with a vowel or sonant, we substitute an “r” for the “s” and paste the words together.

...s + vowel ... → ...rvowel ...

so,

अग्निस् अत्र → अग्निरत्र

agnis atra → agniratra

Note that the “a” for “atra” is still there; it’s just switched into its implied form after we have changed the “s” to an “r” and combined the words into one block.

Moving along, if the next word is a sonant,

...s + sonant ... → ...rsonant...

अग्निस दहति → अग्निर्दहति

agnis dahati → agnirdahati

If you don't see the "r" at first glance, remember that in combination with other consonants, it often takes on the form of a hook over the last consonant in that grouping, but is pronounced ahead of the other consonants with which it is associated: अग्निदहति

So, as a general rule,

If an "s" is followed by a vowel or a sonant, it changes into an "r."

2. The word "general" gives away that things are not quite that simple. Complications come up **when there is an "a" right before that "s"** in the first word. We have seen several instances in both the "a"-conjugation of verbs and the "a"-declension of nouns ending in "as" (अस्), so this matter has been a consideration right from the start. It is also partially an explanation why Perry has numbered the particular sequences of words in your translation from English to Sanskrit. He set it up so that you didn't have to worry about the measures described below.

3. So, let's postulate some scenarios. What happens if one word ends in "as" and its successor begins with a **sonant**? **The sonant stays as it is, but the "as" ending is changed to "o."**

...as + sonant... → ...o + sonant...

नृपस् जयति → नृपो जयति

nṛpas jayati → nṛpo jayati

Let's go further and ask what happens if "as" is followed by a vowel other than "a." The only change in that case is that **the "s" drops out**. Nothing more. This is a rare case of two vowels being next to each other with nothing between them except a space in modern writing.

...as + vowel other than "a" ... → ...a + same vowel ...

नृपस् इच्छति → नृप इच्छति

nṛpas icchati → nṛpa icchati

Now for the case **when the ending of the first word is "as" and the next words opens with "a."** In that case, two adjustments are indicated: **the "as" turns into "o" and the subsequent words drops its initial "a,"** indicated by a special sign.

...as + a... → o + ‘

नृपस् अत्र → नृपो ऽत्र

nṛpas atra → nṛpo 'tra

The sign **ऽ** is called an *avagraha* ("separator"), and it signifies exactly what you see it do here; it indicates the absence of a letter. It does not get pronounced in any way.

One more instance, and we're done with "s" – for now, at least. What if the ending is "ās," such as the plural of an "a"-stem verb? (Recall that for *gaja*, the elephant, the nominative singular is *gajas*, and the plural is *gajās*.) This one is easy again. It does not matter whether the "ās" is followed by a vowel or a sonant consonant. Once again, all we have to do is drop the "s" and keep everything else the same, including the "ā."

...ās + vowel... → ...ā + same vowel...

नृपास् इच्छन्ति → नृपा इच्छन्ति

nṛpās icchanti → *nṛpā icchanti*

Rules for "r." There is not as much to say here for "r" as there was for "s." One of the most important considerations is the conversion to visarga, most of which was brought up in the first lesson.

If a word ending in "r" comes at the end of a sentence or is otherwise isolated, it gives way to the visarga. Thus,

पुनर् (punar, "again") → पुनः punaḥ.

In fact, most of what we have watch out for here is the shift to a visarga in the middle of a sentence as well. Just as with "s," some of these mutations are based on the initial letters of the subsequent word after one that ended with "r." We mentioned that "s" is considered a surd, and that it changes if followed by a sonant. Conversely "r," which is a sonant, changes when it is followed by certain (not all!) surds.

...r + surd... → ...ḥ + surd

The following surds are eligible: *k*, *kh*, *p*, *ph*, and the three sibilants: *ṣ*, *ś*, and *s*. So,

पुनर् पतामि → पुनः पतामि

punar patāmi → *punaḥ patāmi*

"Again I fly."

Perry's last sentence on p. 34, sec. 22, which begins with "But original ..." is a little difficult to follow. It says that "ar" or "ār" will not change before a vowel or sonant. This is as expected, since those changes occur with "s," and we have established that "s" and "r" function reciprocally, so what was mandated by "s" should not be mandated (at least in this case) by "r."

Perry brings up one situation that does not involve the visarga, namely when there are two words in succession in a sentence, and the first one ends in "r," while second one begins with "r." This potential scenario is not admitted, and it cannot result in a visarga either.

...r + r... → X

There is an easy solution to this apparent dilemma. Just drop the first "r." And, to make it clear to the world that this is what you have done make sure that the first word ends in a long vowel. If the vowel before that vanishing "r" was a short one, replace it with its longer version.

...vowelr + r... → ...longvowelr + r...

(Ignore the fact that in this example the second word ends in visarga; that has nothing to do with it. What interests us is the two “r”s in succession.) Thus:

पुनर् रमः → पुना रामः

punar ramah → punā ramah

In this respect “s” and “r” are also equal. An “s” followed by an “r” or an “r” followed by an “s” mandate that the ending consonant of the first word be dropped and its preceding vowel be lengthened.

There is one more wrinkle that Perry already mentioned in lesson 1 and I have withheld from you until now. If there are two words side by side in a sentence, and both of them are eligible for the visarga (either due to an “r” or an “s”), it will appear at the end of the **second** word as well.

पुनर् पतामस् → पुनः पतामः

punar patāmas → punah patāmḥ

“Again we fly.”

Now I invite you to look at the look at the table, in which I have collated all of this material.

Ending of 1 st word	Beginning of 2 nd word	Result
s or r	none	visarga (ḥ)
r	k, kh, p, ph, ṣ ś, and s (surds)	replace r with visarga
	r	drop the first r and lengthen the previous vowel
ar or ār	vowel or sonant	no change
s	vowel	change s to r and merge the words
	sonant	
as	sonant	change as to o;
	vowel other than a	drop the s
	a	as changes to o, the a drops out
ās	any vowel or sonant	drop the s

Please do Exercise IV on page 35 of Perry, *Sanskrit Primer*.

Sample Answers for Exercise IV

1. The gods always save the people from sin.
5. The poets praise Hari.
10. The two sons of the seer stand there on the road.
15. शिव गिरिषु वसति
20. सत्येन जनानाम् भवति सखः

You've worked hard! Please [send me](#) your translations!