



शिखागोविश्वविद्यालये

प्रारम्भिकसंस्कृतम्

FIRST-YEAR SANSKRIT

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



अल्लटाचार्योद्भावितः पाठक्रमः  Designed by Andrew Ollett

COMPARISON of ADJECTIVES

tāratamyam



तारतम्यम्

COMPARISON

Comparison is a grammatical phenomenon in which adjectives stand in a **gradational** relationship to each other. In Sanskrit, as in English, there are **three** degrees of gradation:

- ❁ **positive** “good”
- ❁ **comparative** “better”
- ❁ **superlative** “best”



POSITIVE

The adjectives we have seen so far are all in the **positive** degree. That is, their **form** implies no comparison in the relevant category with anything else.

- *high*
- *low*
- *old*
- *young*

COMPARATIVE AND SUPERLATIVE

Sanskrit has **two overlapping systems of comparison** whereby the comparative and superlative degree can be expressed. One uses the suffixes *tara* and *tama*, and the other uses the suffixes *īyas* and *iṣṭha*.

TARAP-TAMAPAU

Pāṇini teaches two suffixes, *taraP* and *tamaP* (i.e., *-tara-* and *-tama-*), which can be added to almost **any** adjective to form the **comparative** and **superlative** degree respectively.



TARAP-TAMAPAU

The **comparative degree** (*-tara-*) means that something represents **more** of a certain quality or feature than some standard of comparison (= “more x”).

The **superlative degree** (*-tama-*) means that something represents **the most** of a certain quality or feature in comparison with **all others** in a relevant set (= “most x”).

TARAP-TAMAPAU

As these examples show, the suffixes can be added to (the weak form of) **any** adjectival stem. The resulting form is inflected like *dēvaḥ*.

sādhu- “good”

sādhutara- “better”

alpa- “small”

alpatara- “smaller”

dhīmat- “smart”

dhīmattara- “smarter”

TARAP-TAMAPAU

As these examples show, the suffixes can be added to (the weak form of) **any** adjectival stem. The resulting form is inflected like *dēvaḥ*.

sādhu- “good”

sādhutama- “best”

alpa- “small”

alpatama- “smallest”

dhīmat- “smart”

dhīmattama- “smartest”

TARAP-TAMAPAU

As these examples show, the suffixes can be added to (the weak form of) **any** adjectival stem. The resulting form is inflected like *dēvaḥ*.

durmanas- “hostile”

durmanastara- “more h.”

vidvat- “intelligent”

vidvattara- “more l.”

sādhaka- “effective”

sādhakatara- “more e.”

TARAP-TAMAPAU

As these examples show, the suffixes can be added to (the weak form of) **any** adjectival stem. The resulting form is inflected like *dēvaḥ*.

durmanas- “hostile”

durmanastama- “most h.”

vidvat- “intelligent”

vidvattama- “most I.”

sādhaka- “effective”

sādhakatama- “most e.”

ĪYASUN-IṢṬHAN

The suffixes *-(ī)yas* (Pāṇini's *īyasUN*) and *-iṣṭha-* (Pāṇini's *iṣṭhaN*) represent **another** system of comparison, but more limited in scope. These suffixes are only added to express degrees of a **quality** (hence they are only added to *adjectives* as such, and never *nouns*, etc.).

ĪYASUN-IṢṬHAN

paṭu- “sharp”

paṭutara- “sharper”

paṭīyas- “sharper”

nṛ- “man”

nṛtara- “more of a man”

ĪYASUN-IṢṬHAN

The basic idea is this:

- *tara* and *tama* can **always** be used instead of *īyas* and *iṣṭha* respectively;
- but not *vice versa*.

ĪYASUN-IṢṬHAN

Whereas *tara* and *tama* are added to an already-existing adjectival **base**, *īyas* and *iṣṭha* are added to a particular form of the “adjectival root” (from which the positive grade of the adjective is formed by means of a suffix).

ĪYASUN-IṢṬHAN

We don't talk much about "adjectival roots," but they are parallel to verbal roots: abstract representations to which suffixes are added.

The **form** of the "adjectival root" which appears in the positive grade may be different from that which appears in the comparative and superlative grades. In particular, the suffixes *īyas* and *iṣṭha* tend to be added to a *guṇaḥ* form.

ĪYASUN-IṢṬHAN

bah-ula- “ample”

**bah*
(zero grade)

baṁh-īyas- “amplifier”

**baṁh*
(full grade)

baṁh-iṣṭha- “amplest”

mṛd-u- “soft”

**mṛd*
(zero grade)

mrad-īyas- “softer”

**mrad*
(full grade)

mrad-iṣṭha- “softest”

ĪYASUN-IṢṬHAN

kṣip-ra- “swift”

**kṣip*
(zero grade)

kṣēp-īyas- “swifter”

kṣēp-iṣṭha- “swiftest”

**kṣēp*
(full grade)

ur-u- “wide”

**ur*
(zero grade)

var-īyas- “wider”

var-iṣṭha- “widest”

**var*
(full grade)

ĪYASUN-IṢṬHAN

gur-u- “heavy”

**gr*
(zero grade)

gar-īyas- “heavier”

**gar*
(full grade)

gar-iṣṭha- “heaviest”

prth-u- “broad”

**prth*
(zero grade)

prath-īyas- “broader”

**prath*
(full grade)

prath-iṣṭha- “broadest”

ĪYASUN-IṢṬHAN

As the preceding examples demonstrate, the typical form of the comparative suffix is *-īyas-*, especially when added to stems ending in a consonant (which, given that the base takes *guṇaḥ*, is very frequent). But sometimes the *ī* of the suffix is absorbed (by *sandhi* or otherwise) into the final syllable of the base:

ĪYASUN-IṢṬHAN

priy-a- “dear”

**pri(H)*
(zero grade)

prēyas- “dearer”

**prē*
(full grade)

prēṣṭha- “dearest”

(more commonly *priyatama-*)

ĪYASUN-IṢṬHAN

Finally, there are some comparative and superlative forms that have no positive form that corresponds to them in formation. These paradigms can be considered *suppletive* (since different bases are used for different grades of comparison).

ĪYASUN-IṢṬHAN

sādh-u- “good”

śrēyas- “better”

śrēṣṭha- “best”

bah-u- “great”

bhū-yas- “greater”

bhūyiṣṭha- “greatest”

ĪYASUN-IṢṬHAN

laghu- “young”

kanīyas- “younger”

kaniṣṭha- “youngest”

guru- “old”/“great”

gyā-yas- “older”/“greater”

gyēṣṭha- “oldest”/“greatest”

ĪYASUN-IṢṬHAN

antika- “close”

nēdīyas- “closer”

nēdiṣṭha- “closest”



INFLECTION

The forms in *-tara-*, *-tama-*, and *-iṣṭha-* are all completely regular thematic adjectives with a feminine in *ā*.

The forms in *-īyas-* have been introduced separately. They have the strong form *-īyāṃs-* and the weak form *-īyas-*, and the feminine *-īyasī-*.

USAGE

The comparative and superlative adjectives can often be used without any explicit comparison:

गरीयान् दोषो ऽसौ ।

“That is a **very serious** mistake.”

USAGE

But an explicit comparison can be made by putting that to which something is compared in the **ablative case**.

अस्माद्दोषाद् गरीयान् दोषो ऽसौ

“That mistake is **more serious**
than this mistake.”



USAGE

But an explicit comparison can be made by putting that to which something is compared in the **ablative case**.

स मद् उन्नततरः

“He is **taller than me.**”



USAGE

As usual, a form using *-tas* can be substituted for the ablative:

ततो दवीयान् मार्गः ।

“The way is **longer** **than** that.”

USAGE

In fact there is a tendency to use the ablative in this comparative sense even when there is no comparative suffix used:

वज्रादपि कठोराणि मृदूनि कुसुमादपि [Bhavabhūti]

“Harder (lit. hard) **than even adamant**,
softer (lit. soft) **than even a flower**
[are the hearts of great people]”



USAGE

The ablative of comparison is also used with words meaning “other” or “different”:

साहाय्यं मित्रादन्यो न संदधे

[Pañcatantra]

“Noone **besides his friend** offered help.”

USAGE

With the superlative, one can always express the set of possible comparisons with a **partitive** genitive or a locative:

पुरुषाणां/पुरुषेषु श्रेष्ठः

“Best of men/among men”

