



AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

FIRST-YEAR SANSKRIT



अल्लटाचार्योद्धावितः पाठऋमः 🎇 Designed by Andrew Ollett

COMPARISON OT 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*.





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.





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").





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

sādhu- "good"sādhutara- "better"alpa- "small"alpatara- "smaller"dhīmat- "smart"dhīmattara- "smarter"





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durmanas- "hostile" durmanastara- "more h."

vidvat- "intelligent" vidvattara- "more I."

sādhaka- "effective" sādhakatara- "more e."





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ĪYASUN-IŞŢHAN

The suffixes -(*ī*)yas (Pānini's *ī*yasUN) and -istha-(Pānini's *isthaN*) 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-IŞŢHAN patutara- "sharper" patu- "sharp" paţīyas- "sharper" nrtara- "more of a man" nr- "man"





The basic idea is this:

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





Whereas *tara* and *tama* are added to an alreadyexisting 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).





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.





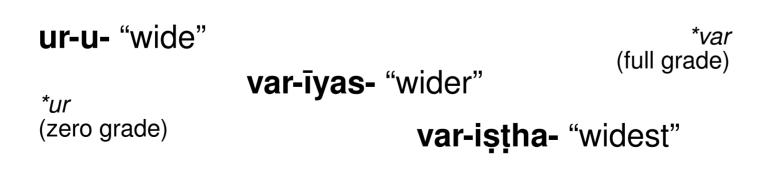
bah-ula- "ample"*bamh
(full grade)bamh-īyas- "ampler"(full grade)*bah
(zero grade)bamh-işţha- "amplest"

mrd-u- "soft"*mrd
(full grade)*mrd
(zero grade)mrad-īyas- "softer"*mrd
(zero grade)mrad-iṣṭha- "softest"





kşip-ra- "swift"*kşēp
(full grade)kşēp-īyas- "swifter"(full grade)*kşip
(zero grade)kşēp-iştha- "swiftest"







ĪYASUN-IȘȚHAN

gur-u- "heavy"*gar
(full grade)gar-īyas- "heavier"*gr
(zero grade)*gr
(zero grade)gar-iṣṭha- "heaviest"

prth-u- "broad"*prath
(full grade)*prth
(zero grade)prath-īyas- "broader"*prth
(zero grade)prath-iṣṭha- "broadest"

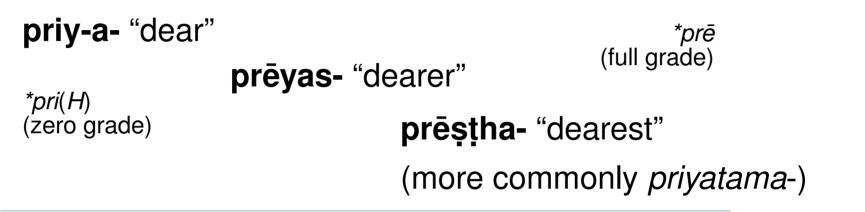




As the preceding examples demonstrate, the typical form of the comparative suffix is *-īyas*-, especially when added to stems ending in a consonant (which, given that the base takes gunah, is very frequent). But sometimes the ī of the suffix is absorbed (by *sandhi* or otherwise) into the final syllable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











ĪYASUN-IȘȚHAN

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).





sādh-u- "good" śrēyas- "better" śrēşţha- "best"

bah-u- "great"

bhū-yas- "greater"

bhūyistha- "greatest"





ĪYASUN-IȘȚHAN

laghu- "young" kanīyas- "younger" kaniṣṭha- "youngest"

guru- "old"/"great"

jyā-yas- "older"/"greater"

jyēştha- "oldest"/"greatest"





antika- "close"

nēdīyas- "closer"

nēdistha- "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 *-īyāms*- and the weak form *-īyas*-, and the feminine *-īyasī*-.





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

गरीयान् दोषो ऽसौ ।

"That is a very serious mistake."





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

"That mistake is **more serious** than this mistake."





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."





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

ततो दवीयान् मार्गः ।

"The way is longer than that."





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

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





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

साहाय्यं मित्रादन्यो न संदधे [Pañcatantra]

"Noone **besides his friend** offered help."





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"



