

The Sanskrit Aorist

Pāṇini designates *endings* of the aorist with the abstract suffix *lUN*, which apply in non-remote past time (as opposed to the imperfect, *laN*, which applies only to the more remote past, and the perfect, *liT*, which applies only to the non-witnessed past).¹ Thus सुखमहम-स्वाप्सं न किञ्चिदवेदिषम् ‘I slept a pleasant [sleep], I wasn’t aware of anything’ (*Vedāntasāra*); अभूत्संपादितस्वादुफलो मे मनोरथः ‘[Today] my desire has become that of which the sweet result is fulfilled’ (*Abhijñānaśakuntala*). In Classical Sanskrit, however, the aorist can be a general past tense marker (i.e., it can apply to both the remote and non-remote past): cf. the common forms अभूत् ‘there was’ (root aorist), अवादीत् ‘he said’ (*iṣ*-aorist), etc.

In Pāṇinian Sanskrit the aorist takes an ‘augment’ before the verbal root.² Augmentless forms occur often in Vedic (as ‘injunctives’, best thought of as tenseless verbs); in Classical Sanskrit augmentless forms are limited to ‘prohibitives’ such as मा भूत् ‘may it not happen’.

Before the aorist endings but after the verbal root, Pāṇini adds an aorist stem-forming suffix (*vikaraṇa*). The ‘abstract’ aorist stem-forming suffix is *Cl*i, which is replaced under specific conditions by other stem-forming suffixes, which are responsible for the form of the various aorist stems.³

The root aorist

Pāṇini actually teaches the root aorist as special a form of the *s*-aorist (see below) in which the characteristic *s* has been deleted after certain roots.⁴ This is because the root aorist shares with the *s*-aorist the 3pl. *parasmaipada* ending *-us* and the characteristic *vṛddhi* of the root vowel in the *parasmaipada*.⁵

Whitney (§834) adduces *ātmanepada* forms of the root aorist are adduced and criticizes Pāṇini for only teaching the root aorist as *parasmaipada*. As noted above, Pāṇini does not teach the root aorist as such *at all*, and the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* does in fact account for the derivation of the forms that Whitney classifies as *ātmanepada* root aorists. (Pāṇini explicitly blocks *guṇa* in the *s*-aorist of certain roots, which in turn triggers the deletion of the *s* in the relevant forms.⁶ licenses several more root aorist forms in Vedic.) The root aorist is therefore formed by secondary endings (3pl. *-us*) added onto the augmented root

¹भूते । ३ । २ । ८४ ॥ ‘in reference to the past’; लुङ् । ३ । २ । ११० ॥ ‘the suffix *lUN*’; अनद्यतने लङ् । ३ । २ । १११ ॥ ‘with reference to remote time, the suffix *laN*’; परोक्षे लिट् । ३ । २ । ११५ ॥ ‘with reference to non-witnessed [remote time], the suffix *liT*’.

²लुङ्लङ्लृङ्ङुदात्तः । ६ । ४ । ७१ ॥

³च्लि लुङि । ३ । १ । ४३ ॥ ‘*Cl*i is added before the verbal suffix *lUN*’.

⁴गातिस्थाघुपाभूयः सिचिः परस्मैपदेषु । २ । ४ । ७७ ॥ ‘[There is deletion] of *siC* before *parasmaipada* endings after the roots √gā, √sthā, √dā, √dhā, √pā, and √bhū’; विभाषा घ्राधेद्वाच्छासः । २ । ४ । ७८ ॥ ‘optionally after √dhrā, √dhe, √sā, √chā, √sā’; मन्त्रे घसह्वरनशवृद्धाद्वृज्जृगमिजनिभ्यो लेः । २ । ४ । ८० ॥ licenses several more root aorist forms in Vedic.

⁵सिज्भ्यस्तविदिभ्यश्च । ३ । ४ । १०९ ॥ ‘[The ending *Jus* is substituted for the ending *JHI*] after an *s*-aorist stem, after the imperfect of reduplicated verbs, and after the root √vid’; सिचि वृद्धिः परस्मैपदेषु । ७ । २ । १ ॥ ‘there is *vṛddhi* of a root before the suffix *siC* and before *parasmaipada* endings’.

⁶लिङ्गिचावात्मनेपदेषु । १ । २ । ११ ॥ ‘The endings of the precativ and *s*-aorist, when *ātmanepada*, have

with *vrddhi* in the *parasmaipada*, and onto the augmented root without *guṇa* or *vrddhi* in the *ātmanepada*. Examples from *√sthā* ‘stand’ and *√kr* ‘do’:

३	अस्थाम्	अस्थाव	अस्थाम्
२	अस्थाः	अस्थातम्	अस्थात
१	अस्थात्	अस्थाताम्	अस्थुः

३	अक्रि	—	—
२	अकृथाः	—	—
१	अकृत	अक्राताम्	अकृत

The sigmatic aorists

This term encompasses several types of stem with different formal properties. First to be mentioned here are those stems formed with the suffix *siC*. When the root to which *siC* is added is *aniT*, i.e., when no *i* intervenes between the root and the aorist ending, a paradigm results that is often called the *s*-aorist. But when the root to which *siC* is added is *seT*, i.e., when *i* intervenes between the root and the aorist ending, the *iṣ*-aorist paradigm results (discussed below).

The endings are the same as those of the root aorist, and—importantly—an *i* appears between the stem-forming suffix and the verbal ending when the latter consists of a single consonant.⁷ Like the root aorist, the root takes *vrddhi* in the *parasmaipada*. In the *ātmanepada*, things are more complicated. Roots ending in a consonant generally lack *guṇa* (see *√budh* below), but roots ending a vowel generally have it (see *√ji*).

As noted above, Pāṇini deletes the *s* of this form in certain roots in order to derive the root aorist. But *s* is also deleted before endings beginning with *dh*, and—more generally—*s* is deleted in between any two consonants (excluding nasals or semivowels) in Sanskrit.⁸ This might sometimes cause confusion with the root aorist. Examples of the *s*-aorist are: *√ji* ‘conquer’, *√vah* ‘convey’, and *√vas* ‘live’ (*parasmaipada*) and *√budh* ‘be aware’ (*ātmanepada*):

	परस्मैपदम्			आत्मनेपदम्		
३	अजैषम्	अजैष्व	अजैष्म	व्यजेषि	व्यजेष्वहि	व्यजेष्महि
२	अजैषीः	अजैष्टम्	अजैष्ट	व्यजेष्ठाः	व्यजेष्ठाथाम्	व्यजेष्ट्वम्
१	अजैषीत्	अजैष्टाम्	अजैष्ठुः	व्यजेष्ट	व्यजेष्ठाताम्	व्यजेष्ट

the diacritic *K*’; ह्रस्वादङ्गात् । ८ । २ । २७ ॥ ‘[there is deletion of *s*] after a short base [and before an ending beginning with a stop consonant]’. Vedic forms like अक्रि and अकृत are made possible by the aforementioned मन्त्रे घसहरनशवृदहाद्वृज्कृगमिजनिभ्यो लेः । २ । ४ । ८० ॥.

⁷गातिस्थाघुपाभूयः सिचः परस्मैपदेषु । २ । ४ । ७७ ॥, अस्तिसिचो ऽपृक्ते । ७ । ३ । ९६ ॥

⁸धि च । ८ । २ । २५ ॥ ‘[there is deletion of *s*] also before an ending beginning with *dh*’; झलो झलि । ८ । २ । २६ ॥ ‘[there is deletion of *s*] after a root ending in a stop consonant and before an ending beginning with a stop consonant’.

	परस्मैपदम्			आत्मनेपदम्		
३	अवाक्षम्	अवाक्ष्व	अवाक्ष्म	अवक्षि	अवक्ष्वहि	अवक्ष्महि
२	अवाक्षीः	अवोढम्	अवोढ	अवोढाः	अवक्षाथाम्	अवोढ्वम्
१	अवाक्षीत्	अवोढाम्	अवाक्षुः	अवोढ	अवक्षाताम्	अवक्षत

३	अवात्सम्	अवात्स्व	अवात्स्म
२	अवात्सीः	अवात्तम्	अवात्त
१	अवात्सीत्	अवात्ताम्	अवात्सुः

३	अभुत्सि	अभुत्स्वहि	अभुत्स्महि
२	अबुद्धाः	अभुत्साथाम्	अभुध्वम्
१	अबुद्ध	अभुत्साताम्	अभुत्सत

The *iṣ*-aorist is just an *s*-aorist to *seṭ* roots (i.e., those roots which take the augment *i* before endings).⁹ The root is always *guṇa* in the *ātmanepada*, but some roots take *guṇa* and others take *vrddhi* in the *parasmaipada*.¹⁰ Examples include 1sg. अस्ताविषम्, 3sg. अस्तावीत् (*parasmaipada*), 1sg. अस्तरिषि, 3sg. अस्तरिष्ट (*ātmanepada*), and √pū ‘purify’:

	परस्मैपदम्			आत्मनेपदम्		
३	अपाविषम्	अपाविष्व	अपाविष्म	अपविषि	अपविष्वहि	अपविष्महि
२	अपावीः	अपाविष्टम्	अपाविष्ट	अपविष्ठाः	अपविष्ठाथाम्	अपविष्ट्वम्
१	अपावीत्	अपाविष्टाम्	अपाविषुः	अपविष्ट	अपविष्ठाताम्	अपविषत

Note that 8th-class verbs in these paradigms can lose their final nasal and take *aniṭ* endings: e.g., अतत or अतनिष्ट ‘he stretched’.¹¹

The *siṣ*-aorist is exclusively *parasmaipada*. It is formed when both *iṭ* (i.e., *i*) appears before the aorist stem-forming suffix and *sAK* (i.e., *s*) appears after the verbal root (e.g., *a-yam-sAK-iṭ-siC* > *ayamsiṣ*-). It is only made to √ram, √yam, √nam, and some roots ending in *-ā*.¹² It is essentially a doubly-characterized *is*-aorist. Examples from √yam ‘control’:

⁹आर्धधातुकस्येड्विस्त्रादेः । ७ । २ । ३५ ॥ ‘The augment *i* appears before an *ārdhadhātuka* suffix that begins with a consonant besides *y*’.

¹⁰*Guṇa* in the *ātmanepada* results from the fact that, in *seṭ* roots, the base to which *siC* always ends in *iṭ* and therefore never in a (real) consonant. *Vrddhi* in the *parasmaipada* is the rule by सिचि वृद्धिः परस्मैपदेषु । ७ । २ । १ ॥ but *guṇa* is taught in ह्यन्तक्षणश्वसजागृणिश्च्येदिदाम् । ७ । २ । ५ ॥ ‘[no *vrddhi*] for roots that end in *h*, *m*, or *y*, √kṣaṇ, √śvas, √jāgr, those ending in *Ṇi*, and √śvi, and those with the marker *eṭ*’.

¹¹अनुदात्तोपदेशवनतितनोत्यादीनामनुनासिकलोपो झलि किङिति । ६ । ४ । ३७ ॥

¹²यमरमनमातां सकृ च । ७ । २ । ७३ ॥

३	अयंसिषम्	अयंसिष्व	अयंसिष्म
२	अयंसीः	अयंसिष्टम्	अयंसिष्ट
१	अयंसीत्	अयंसिष्टाम्	अयंसिष्टुः

Some historical background: the *s*-aorist is an Indo-European formation. In *aniṭ* roots, there was originally no *i* inserted between the *s* and the ending; thus, in the *Ṛgveda*, no forms like अवात्सीत् are found. Instead, we get (e.g.) अभार् < *a-bhār-s-t*, अद्राक् < *a-drās-s-t*, अक्रान् < *a-krānd-s-t*. In *seṭ* roots, however, the *i*—which is the reflex of a Proto-Indo-European laryngeal—appeared throughout the paradigm of *s*-aorists, and before consonantal endings of root aorists. Thus the aorist of √*grah* was originally a root aorist, as shown by 1sg. अग्रभम् (< **He-g^hreb^h-H-m*), 3pl. अग्रभन् (< **He-g^hreb^h-ro*). But because of the analogy between the 3sg. अग्रभीत् (< **He-g^hreb^h-H-t*) and *iṣ*-aorists such as अपावीत्, the entire paradigm shifted to the *iṣ*-aorist around the time of the *Atharvaveda* (hence 1sg. अग्रहिषम्, 3pl. अग्रहिषुः. Later, the ending ँईः, ईत् of the *iṣ*-aorist and erstwhile root-aorist to *seṭ* roots was carried over to the *s*-aorist as well.).

The *sa*-aorist is formed with the suffix *Ksa* to verbal roots of specific phonological shapes (i.e., those ending in *ś*, *ṣ*, *s*, or *h*, with the vowels *i*, *u*, or *r* preceding, so long as the affix *iṭ* is not present).¹³ This is a ‘thematic’ conjugation, because the thematic vowel *a* intervenes between the aorist suffix (*s*) and the endings of the verb. In certain cases, however, the entire suffix (*sa*) is deleted.¹⁴ From the verb √*guh* ‘hide’ (also showing the operation of Grassmann’s Law):

	परस्मैपदम्				आत्मनेपदम्	
३	अघुक्षम्	अघुक्षाव	अघुक्षाम	अघुक्षि	अघुक्षावहि	अघुक्षामहि
					अगुह्वहि	
२	अघुक्षः	अघुक्षतम्	अघुक्षत	अघुक्षथाः	अघुक्षायाम्	अख्यध्वम्
				अगूढाः		अघूढम्
१	अघुक्षत्	अघुक्षताम्	अघुक्षन्	अघुक्षत	अघुक्षाताम्	अघुक्षन्त
				अगूढ		

The *a*-aorist

Formed with the stem-forming suffix *aṆ*, this is sometimes called a *thematic aorist* (because a ‘thematic vowel’ intervenes between the root and the ending). The root does not undergo *guṇa* or *vṛddhi*, except √*drś* and roots ending in *-r* or *-ṛ*.¹⁵ Penultimate nasals are also dropped in a stem—a difference between the thematic aorist and the imperfect of thematic stems (contrast असिञ्चत् ‘he sprinkled’, imperfect, with असिचत् ‘he sprinkled’, aorist).

¹³शल इगुपधादनिटः क्सः । ३ । १ । ४५ ॥ Note that √*drś* takes the aorist stem-forming suffix *aṆ*, as explicitly specified in 7.4.14.

¹⁴लुगवा दुहदिहलिहगुहामात्मनेपदे दन्त्ये । ७ । ३ । ७३ ॥ ‘There can be complete deletion [of *Ksa*] when it precedes an *ātmanepada* ending of the roots √*duh*, √*dih*, √*lih*, and √*guh* that begins with a dental consonant’.

¹⁵ऋदृशो ऽङि गुणः । ७ । ४ । १४ ॥

	परस्मैपदम्				आत्मनेपदम्		
३	अख्यम्	अख्याव	अख्याम	अख्ये	अख्यावहि	अख्यामहि	
२	अख्यः	अख्यतम्	अख्यत	अख्यथाः	अख्येथाम्	अख्यध्वम्	
१	अख्यत्	अख्यताम्	अख्यन्	अख्यत	अख्येताम्	अख्यन्त	

The reduplicated aorist

There are two types of reduplicated aorists in Sanskrit. The first is taught by Pāṇini as a subtype of the *a*-aorist: in certain roots, a kind of infixation occurs before the aorist stem-forming suffix *aN* which can be analyzed as reduplication (i.e., *pa-pt-* from \sqrt{pat} , and *voc* = *va-vc-* from \sqrt{vac}), although Pāṇini himself does not call these forms reduplicated.¹⁶ This type is also Proto-Indo-European: cf. Greek $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\pi\omicron\nu$ and Sanskrit *avocam* both < **He-we-wk^w-om*:

	परस्मैपदम्				आत्मनेपदम्		
३	अवोचम्	अवोचाव	अचोचाम	अवोचे	अवोचावहि	अवोचामहि	
२	अवोचः	अवोचतम्	अचोवत	अचोवथाः	अवोचेथाम्	अवोचध्वम्	
१	अवोचत्	अवोचताम्	अचोचन्	अवोचत	अवोचेताम्	अवोचन्त	

The second type of reduplicated aorist, which is formed by the suffix *CaN*, is also thematic, but it follows the rules of reduplication taught for the desiderative (i.e., lengthen the reduplicating vowel if it would otherwise constitute a light syllable).¹⁷ This is the aorist formation that corresponds to the causative, and tenth-class verbs as well as \sqrt{sri} , \sqrt{dru} , and \sqrt{sru} obligatorily take this form. The example is \sqrt{sri} ‘cling to’ and \sqrt{kr} ‘do’ (in this case, the aorist corresponding to *कारयति* meaning ‘cause to do’).

	परस्मैपदम्				आत्मनेपदम्		
३	अशिश्त्रियम्	अशिश्त्रियाव	अशिश्त्रियाम	अशिश्त्रिये	अशिश्त्रियावहि	अशिश्त्रियामहि	
२	अशिश्त्रियः	अशिश्त्रियतम्	अशिश्त्रियत	अशिश्त्रियथाः	अशिश्त्रियथाम्	अशिश्त्रियध्वम्	
१	अशिश्त्रियत्	अशिश्त्रियताम्	अशिश्त्रियन्	अशिश्त्रियत	अशिश्त्रियताम्	अशिश्त्रियन्त	

	परस्मैपदम्				आत्मनेपदम्		
३	अचीकरम्	अचीकराव	अचीकराम	अचीकरे	अचीकरावहि	अचीकरामहि	
२	अचीकरः	अचीकरतम्	अचीकरत	अचीकरथाः	अचीकरेथाम्	अचीकरध्वम्	
१	अचीकरत्	अचीकरताम्	अचीकरन्	अचीकरत	अचीकरेताम्	अचीकरन्त	

¹⁶पतः पुम । ७ । ४ । १९ ॥ ‘after \sqrt{pat} , *p* is inserted after the root vowel’; वच उम । ७ । ४ । २० ॥ ‘after \sqrt{vac} , *u* [is inserted] after the root vowel’.

¹⁷चङि । ६ । १ । ११ ॥, ‘[There is reduplication] before an aorist-stem in *CaN*’; सन्वल्ह्युनि चङ्गरे ऽनग्लोपे । ७ । ४ । ९३ ॥

The impersonal aorist

The stem-forming suffix *CiṆ* produces a stem which (1) generally has *guṇa* of the root; (2) takes no personal endings; and (3) is used either reflexively, passively, or to express a state (in a small number of roots, such as *√budh*, this form can stand in for the regular 3sg.).¹⁸ The qualifier ‘generally’ is necessary because suffixes marked with *Ṇ* in Pāṇini trigger *guṇa* of the root generally, but *vrddhi* when the root ends in a vowel.¹⁹

Examples: अजनि ‘is born’, अकारि ‘is made’, अहारि ‘is carried’, अधायि ‘is set out’.

¹⁸अचः कर्मकर्तरि । ३ । १ । ६२ ॥ ‘[the suffix *CiṆ* replaces *Cli* in the third person singular] after a root ending in a vowel, in the sense of an agent which is also the object’; चिणभावकर्मणोः । ३ । १ । ६६ ॥ ‘the suffix *CiṆ* [replaces *Cli* in the third person singular] in the sense of a state or the object’; चिणो लुक् । ६ । ४ । १०४ ॥ ‘after the suffix *CiṆ*, there is deletion [of the verbal endings]’

¹⁹अचो ङिति । ७ । २ । ११५ ॥