Sanskrit Case Functions

Key to the examples in these notes:
- Sandhis have been broken to clearly illustrate cases.
- The English word that is in the case being illustrated is underlined.
- Italics indicate an English phrase required to translate the declined sanskrit word.

1. प्रथम विभक्ति  Nominative: naming.
   a). Subject of the actively used verb in a clause or sentence:
      गुरुः नवत्।  The teacher speaks.
   b). Subjective complement (a noun connected to the subject by the verbs be or become):
      राम् नृप: अतिः। Rāma is king. पुत्रा: वीरा: भवति। The sons become heroes.
   c). Noun in apposition to the subject (noun modifying the subject noun):
      राम् वीरै: जयति। Rāma, the hero, conquers.
   d). Adjectives modifying a noun in the nominative case.
      सून्दरः बालः आगच्छति। The beautiful boy comes.
   e). Neuter nominative singular can function as indeclinable adverb.
      eg: सुल्ल = happily.

2. द्वितीया विभक्ति  Accusative: direct object.
   a). Direct object of a transitive (active) verb, (the thing acted upon):
      रामं बोधाम। We know Rāma.
   b). Objective Complement - a noun connected to the direct object by the verbs "be" or "become":
      रामः वीरं बोधाम। We know Rāma to be a hero.
   c). Destination of verbs of motion: रामं वनं गच्छति। Rāma goes to the forest.
   d). Occasionally with some prepositions: (eg above, below, near, around, etc)
3. तृतीया विभिन्ति  Instrumental: agent or instrument. “by” or “with”

a). To indicate an instrument used in the action:
    सि: शेष हुनि। गोले kills with an arrow.

b). Agent (doer) of a passive participle or passive verb:
    सि: नृपेन हुति। He was killed by the king.

c). To indicate accompaniment, usually with “सह”, “समान्”, or “साक्षम्” (with):
    राम: सीताया गच्छति। or राम: सीताया सह गच्छति। Rāma goes with Sītā.

d). “विना” (“without”) usually takes instrumental.
    राम: सीताया विना चल्य गच्छति। Rāma goes to the forest without Sītā.

e). To indicate cause or reason (हेतु) — “because or owing to”:
    जीव: दुःखश्रेय बन्धु। The jīva is bound by (owing to) sorrow.

f). With “सदृश्, “तुल्यम्” (”equal to, same”).

g). Instrumental noun can be used adverbially: “सुखेन्” = ”happily.”

h). In expressions like “by name,” “by nature.”

i). With अल्पम् and कृत्म् (“enough”): अल्प दुःखेन् = “enough with sorrow.”

j). किम् + noun in instrumental – “what is the use (purpose) of _______?”
   किं धनेन = what is the use of wealth?

4. चतुर्थी विभिन्ति  Dative: indirect object. “for” or “for the sake of”

a). Indirect object of verbs like “give, send, show,” etc.
    The one “to or for whom” the action of these verbs is done:
    गुरु: शिष्यभाग: पुस्तकानि गच्छति। The teacher gives the books to the students.

b). To indicate the person or thing for whose advantage the action is done
    (for the sake of):
    राजा जनोपि: गर्भं करोति। The king rules for (the sake of) the people.

c). To express the purpose of an action:
    युद्धाय गच्छतिः। He goes for war (with a purpose to fight).

d). The object of verbs showing malice or anger.
    पिता पुत्राय भयंति। The father is angry with the son.

e). With particles showing reverence: नम: and स्वस्ति:
    हनुमः नम:। “Salutations to Hanumān.”

f). “विना” (“without”) sometimes takes dative.
5. पञ्चमी विभक्ति Ablative: origin, source. "of" or "from"

a). To indicate the place or time from which the action originates.
    मुनि: वनाल्‍य गच्छति। The sage goes from the forest.

b). The object of verbs meaning "to desist from," "to protect," "to fear."
    ईश्वर: नरान्‍युखात्‍यथात्‍यथात्। God protects men from misery.

c). To express cause or motive (similar to instrumental):
    क्रोधात्‍य वाल्‍य तुद्वत्। Out of anger he strikes the boy.

d). With a comparative: आत्मन: अन्यः (other than अत्माः).

e). With some prepositions (before, east of, after, until, etc.)

6. पष्टी विभक्ति Genitive: Possessive. "of" or "for"

a). To indicate possession. The possessor is placed in the genitive:
    Rāma's book. - सामस्य पुस्तक (The book of Rāma.)

b). To replace the English verb "to have":
    राम यस्मि अविभागित। Of Rāma there is a wife.

Note: the genitive has no relation to the verb. It indicates the relationship between two
nouns. The genitive (possessor) is placed before the noun possessed.

c). Sometimes used in place of the dative with verbs to give, show, etc.

d). Often used in place of dative to give sense of "for" (eg. qualified for).

e). As the subject or object of an "ing word" (noun derived from verb).
    तत्‍ रुज्जोः घ्रिः ख्याति लमः। His grasping of the rope saved him.

7. सप्तमी विभक्ति Locative: Location in space or time. "in, on, at" etc.)

a). To indicate the location in time or space where the action takes place.
    (in, at, on, upon, among etc.): वनेऽवसति। He lives in the forest.

b). In the sense of "with reference to" or "with regard to" in terms of
    subject matter.

c). The object of love or devotion is placed in locative case.
    राजा गाम स्निहाति। The king loves Rāma.

d). In absolute construction (सति सप्तमिः), indicates simultaneous action.

8. संबोधन Vocative: Direct address.

a). When directly addressing someone: हे राम। Oh Rama!