Sanskrit Lesson

From the Vajra Prajna Paramita Sutra———

पात्रचीवरं प्रतिशाम्य
पादै प्रहनल्य न्यषीदत्

PĀTRACĪVARAM PRATIŚĀMYA PĀDĀU PRAKṢALYA
NYAṢĪDAT

HAVING PUT AWAY HIS ROBE AND BOWL, AND
HAVING WASHED HIS FEET, (HE) SAT DOWN

This lesson continues the sentence
begun in previous lessons. It says that
when the *bhagavān* "the Honored One" had
come back from his begging rounds and
had eaten his meal, *pātra-cīvaram prati-*
śāmya "having put away his robe and bowl."
The words *pātra* "bowl" and *cīvara* "robe"
and the compound word they form were
discussed before. Here the compound is
the direct object of the gerund formed
from prefix *prati-* and root √*śam-*, the
verb which in the third person singular
present tense, active voice, indicative
mode is *pratiśāmayati* "(he) puts away."
Note that this is the causative version
of the present stem, indicated by the
insertion of *-aya-* and the strengthening
of the root from √*śam- to* √*śām-*. The
regular (non-causative) stem from *prati-*
√*śam-* means "restore," and the causative
makes it "cause to be restored," which
amounts to "put away" or "store away."

Another subordinate phrase with a
gerund follows: *pādāu prakṣalya* "(and)
having washed his feet." *pādāu* "feet"
is accusative case used for the direct
object of the gerund *prakṣalya* "having
washed." *pādāu* is dual in number, for
Sanskrit has a separate set of endings
to express just two of something. The
full declension of *pāda-* "foot," which
is a masculine noun, is as follows:

	singular	dual	plural
Nom.	pādas	pādāu	pādās
Acc.	pādam	pādāu	pādān
Inst.	pādena	pādābhyām	pādāis
Dat.	pādāya	pādābhyām	pādebhyas
Abl.	pādāt	pādābhyām	pādebhyas
Gen.	pādasya	pādayos	pādānām
Loc.	pāde	pādayos	pādeṣu
Voc.	pāda	pādāu	pādās

The gerund *prakṣalya* "having washed"
is from from prefix *pra-* and root √*kṣal-*
by adding the gerund suffix *-ya* as in
the previous examples of gerunds made
from roots with prefixes.

The verb *nyaṣīdat* "(he) sat down"
is third person singular, imperfect tense,
active voice, indicative mode. The sub-
ject, understood, is *bhagavān* "the Honor-
ed One," that is, the Buddha. The verb
is formed from prefix *ni-* which gives the
idea of "down," and root √*sad-* "sit." It
belongs to the class of verbs introduced
before, that of stems in short *-a*. Verbs
of that class all add *-a* to the root to
form the present tense stem, to which
primary endings are added. The verb
√*sad-* is unusual, however, in that its
present stem is *sīda-*. When prefix *ni-*
is added, internal *sandhi* (sound combin-
ation) takes place, and *-s-* becomes the
refloflex sibilant *-ṣ-*. The present stem
is therefore *niṣīda-*, and the third per-
son singular present active indicative is
niṣīdati "(he) sits down."

The Imperfect Tense

The imperfect tense in Sanskrit
doesn't function the same way as the im-
perfect tense in English. In Sanskrit,
it is regularly used to describe events
that have happened in the past. In San-
skrit, the imperfect tense is formed upon
the present tense stem by adding another
syllable called the "augment." It is the
short vowel *a-* and is added before the
root. Then secondary endings are added,
instead of the primary endings used for
the present tense. When there is a pre-
fix before the root, the augment is added
between the prefix and the root. When
the augment is added in the case of the
stem *niṣīda-*, it forms an unstable com-
bination: *ni - a - sīda-*. The *i* of *ni-*
then becomes *ny-* before the *a-*, result-
ing in the imperfect stem *nyaṣīda-*. The
third personal singular secondary ending
-t- is then added, giving *nyaṣīdat* "(he)
sits down," the form in the text.

	Chart of the Imperfect Tense in the Active Voice		
	singular	dual	plural
1st	nyaṣīdam	nyaṣīdāva	nyaṣīdāma
2nd	nyaṣīdas	nyaṣīdatam	nyaṣīdata
3rd	nyaṣīdat	nyaṣīdatām	nyaṣīdavan