

Undergraduate Courses offered by Centre of Buddhist Studies in 2025-2026
ELECTIVE COURSE
(OPEN TO ALL FACULTIES)

BSTC2008
Sanskrit language I

Offering Semester	First Semester
Lecturer	Dr. Amrita Nanda
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Schedule	TBC
Class Venue	TBC

Course Description:

Sanskrit, being one of the most ancient languages known to humankind, is considered by some to be a key to understanding human civilization, in particular, the rich cultural, philosophical and religious heritage of India whose influence on our world continues to be felt. Students of history, history of science, comparative literature, general and historical linguistics, philosophy and religions will discover that a basic knowledge of the language greatly enriches their studies. For students who intend to specialize in different aspects of Indian Buddhism, a reading knowledge of Sanskrit is essential. This course will give a comprehensive overview of the history, structure, and grammar of the language, covering topics such as scripts, phonetics, declensions, conjugations, and meters. Students are expected to be able to read and comprehend simple Sanskrit passages by the end of the course.

Course Content:

This course is designed for absolute beginners, no prior knowledge of Sanskrit is required for this course. This course will give a comprehensive overview of the history, structure, and grammar of the language, covering topics such as scripts, phonetics, declensions, conjugations, and meters. Students are expected to be able to read and comprehend a simple Sanskrit passage by the end of the course. This course is not for speaking Sanskrit.

The course begins with basic Sanskrit grammar along with exercises selected from Buddhist texts. As the students learn and attempt the graded passages, all the grammar involved will be analyzed and doctrines will be explained to them in a gradual build-up manner. This includes the following: Sanskrit alphabets, Devanāgarī Scripts three genders, three numbers, different nouns, and their declensions, different verbs and their conjugations, present tense, future tense, and past tense verbs, participles and their functions, gerunds, sandhi, classification of sentences.

Objectives

- (1) To enable students to read and comprehend simple Sanskrit passages.
- (2) To enable understanding of the basic structure and grammar of the Sanskrit language.
- (3) To help students to understand Sanskrit Buddhist Literature.

Teaching and Learning Method: Lectures, class discussions, and tutorials.

Assessment:

- **50% Coursework**
 - 10 % class-participation
 - 25 % mid-term quiz (open-book quiz)
 - 15 % weekly homework
- **50% Final examination** at the end of the semester (open-book exam).

Faculty Grade Expectations. http://arts.hku.hk/grade_expectations.pdf

Lecture Schedule

Lesson 1

- Introduction to Sanskrit Language
- Introduction to Sanskrit Alphabet
- Introducing the Devanāgarī Scripts

Lesson 2

- Writing the Devanāgarī Scripts
- A General Introduction to Sanskrit Nominals:
 - Three Genders of Sanskrit Nouns
 - Three numbers in Sanskrit
 - Introduction to Eight Cases in Sanskrit

Lesson 3

- Declension of masculine nouns ending in —a:
- Introducing nominative, genitive, and locative cases
- Writing Complex Devanāgarī Scripts
- Indeclinable particles *ca*, *vā* and *api*

Lesson 4

- Introducing the accusative case and the ablative case
- Introduction to Sanskrit Adjectives
- Practicing Sanskrit to English translation exercises.

Lesson 5

- Introducing the dative case and the vocative case and instrumental case.
- Introduction to Sanskrit Verbs:
 - Verbal prefixes
 - Three grades of strengthening verbs
 - Class I, IV, VI, and X verbs
 - Conjugation of class I verbs in the present tense

Lesson 6

- Introduction neutral nouns ending in —a:

- The indeclinable particle –*iti*, *eva* and *sma*
- Introduction to Feminine nouns ending in —*ā*.
- *Anusvara sandhi* (full sandhi will be introduced in lesson 10).
- Vocabularies and reading selected Sanskrit passages.

Lesson 7

- Causative verbs
- **Mid-term quiz**

Lesson 8

- Past Passive Participles form
- Suffixes —*tā*, *tva*, and *tas*.
- Reading selected Sanskrit passages.

Lesson 9

- Introduction to Personal Pronouns
- Introduction to nouns ending in—*u*
 - Declension of masculine nouns ending in —*u*
 - Declension of neutral nouns ending in—*u*
- Vocabularies and Practicing Sanskrit to English translation exercises.

Lesson 10

- Gerunds verbs
- Introduction to —*i* ending nouns:
 - Declension of Masculine gender nouns ending in —*i*
 - Declension of Neutral gender nouns ending in —*i*
 - Declension Feminine gender nouns ending in —*i*
 - Demonstrative Pronouns

Lesson 11

- Introduction to Sandhi
- Interrogative Pronouns
- Review for the exam

Note: This schedule is both approximate and flexible. We may deviate from it depending on the pace of students' comprehension and feedback during the class.

Textbook:

Dhammajoti, Kuala Lumpur (2015), *Reading Buddhist Sanskrit Texts: An Elementary Grammatical Guide* (3rd edition), The Buddha-Dharma Centre of Hong Kong Ltd. Hong Kong.

(Those who want to have copy can directly by from the Buddha-Dharma centre of Hong Kong:
<https://buddhadharma.co/Reading-Buddhist-Sanskrit-Texts-An-Elementary-Grammatical-Guide>

Note: We will be selective in following the textbook. Therefore, handouts will be uploaded to Moodle before every class.

Reference books:

Ruppel, A.M. (2017). *The Cambridge Introduction to Sanskrit*. Cambridge: Cambridge university press.
 Speijer, J.S. (1998), *Sanskrit Syntax*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi.

Bucknell, R.S. (1994) *Sanskrit Manual: A quick-reference guide to the phonology and grammar of Classical Sanskrit*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi.

Thomas, Egenes (1994) *Introduction to Sanskrit: Part I*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi.

- (2000), *Introduction to Sanskrit: Part II*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi.

Whitney, Williams D. (1979), *The Roots, Verbs-forms and Primary Derivatives of the Sanskrit Language*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi.

— (2003) *Sanskrit Grammar*, Dover Publications, Inc, New York.

Goldman Robert P. & Goldman Sutherland Sally J. (2011) *An Introduction to Sanskrit Language*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi.

Monier, Williams (1979), *A Sanskrit English Dictionary*, Motilal Banarasidass Publishers, Delhi.

Online Resources:

For Devanagārī script writing and alphabets pronunciation practice:

<https://enjoylearningsanskrit.com/sanskrit-alphabet-tutor/>

For additional Sanskrit Grammar practice:

<https://ubcsanskrit.ca/>

Sanskrit Dictionary

1. <https://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/scans/MWScan/2020/web/webtc/indexcaller.php>
2. <http://dsal.uchicago.edu/dictionaries/apte/>

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<http://arts.hku.hk/current-students/undergraduate/assessment/plagiarism>