

Undergraduate Courses offered by Centre of Buddhist Studies in 2025-2026

ELECTIVES
(OPEN TO ALL FACULTIES)

BSCT3040 Sanskrit language III

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

Course Description

Sanskrit is one of the most ancient languages in the world and is studied by scholars of language and literature, religion, history and anthropology, and anyone who is interested in India's Buddhist cultural heritage. Sanskrit is the language not just of the religious literature of Hinduism and Buddhism but extends to the fields of philosophy, science, art, music, mathematics, architecture, and history, covering over three thousand years of development. Knowledge of Sanskrit grants access to an enormous body of Indian and Buddhist literature. The main focus of this course is the grammar of the language, covering parts of speech, nouns of different gender and their declensions, verbs and their conjugations, participles and their functions, syntax, and reading and translation of selected Sanskrit passages from the *Jātakamāla* and the *Mahāvastu*. Students will be able to read and comprehend simple Sanskrit passages by the end of the course.

Prerequisite: “BSTC2020. Sanskrit language II” or possess equivalent knowledge

Course Content

This Advanced Sanskrit course mainly focuses on reading and translating the selected Sanskrit passages from the Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines (*Aṣṭasāhasrikā prajñāpāramitā sūtra*), the heart sūtra (*Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya sūtra*), *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā sūtra* and the *Jātakas*. As the course proceeds, gradually and systematically, all grammatical features, vocabulary, and the doctrines involved in the selected passages will be explained. Pedagogically, it balances the traditional practice of textual reception—reading and grammar—with language production.

The pedagogy behind this selection of readings is that these four texts represent three different genres of Buddhist Sanskrit literature. The *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* is one of the earliest Mahāyāna Buddhist literature and thoughts. It forms the basis for the expansion and development of *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra* literature. It greatly influenced the development of Madhyāmaka and Yogācāra thought. Linguistically, it represents *sūtra*, or Buddhist canonical writing styles and techniques. The Heart Sūtra and Diamond-cutter sutra are the most recited, copied, and studied scripture in Mahāyāna Buddhism. The *Jātakas* are a voluminous body of early Buddhist literature that mainly concerns the previous births of Gautama Buddha in both human and animal forms. Linguistically, it is a mixture of prose narrative and narrative poetry. This genre is one of the oldest classes of Buddhist literature.

Learning outcomes

1. At the end of this course, students are expected to be able to read and comprehend Sanskrit texts.
2. Understand the development of Buddhist thoughts and civilization.
3. Understand the significance of Sanskrit Buddhist literature.
4. Students learn to examine and investigate Buddhist teachings from different perspectives.
5. Students will be able to chant and recite with a high degree of accuracy.

Teaching and Learning Method

Lectures and class discussions

Assessment

50% coursework and 50% examination

- **50% Coursework**
 - 15%-Class-participation
 - 20 %- Mid-term Quiz (open-book quiz).
 - 15 % a short essay (1500 words).
- **50% Final examination** at the end of the semester. (Open-book examination)

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

Lecture Schedule

Detailed Lecture outlines:

Lectures 1- 4 Reading the first chapter, ‘Practice of a Bodhisattva’ (*sarvākārajñatā-caryā prathamāḥ parivartah*) of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā prajñāpāramitā sūtram*.

Lecture 1:

- Introduction to the Course
- Introduction to selected text
- **Sanskrit text paragraphs 1-5:** Guide to the text and translation of the selected passages with grammatical analysis.

Lecture2:

- **Sanskrit Text paragraphs 6-10:** Guide to the text and translation of the selected passages with grammatical analysis.

Lecture 3:

- **Sanskrit Text paragraphs 11-15:** Guide to the text and translation of the selected passages with grammatical analysis.

Lecture 4:

- **Sanskrit Text paragraphs 16-22:** Guide to the text and translation of the selected passages with grammatical analysis.

Lectures 5: The *Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya sūtram*

- Introduction to the text.
- Translation of the text with grammatical analysis.
- Discussion on the doctrine in the selected texts.

Lecture 6: The *Vajrachedikā Prajñāpāramitā sūtram*

- Introduction to the texts
- **Sanskrit Text paragraphs 1-4:** Guide to the text and translation of the selected passages with grammatical analysis.

Lecture 7: The *Vajrachedikā Prajñāpāramitā sūtram*

- **Sanskrit Text paragraphs 4-8:** Guide to the text and translation of the selected passages with grammatical analysis.

Mid-term Quiz (open book).

Lecture 8: The *Vajrachedikā Prajñāpāramitā sūtram*

- **Sanskrit Text paragraphs 9-14:** Guide to the text and translation of the selected passages with grammatical analysis.

Lecture 9-12: Selected passages from *the Jātakas*

Lecture 9: *vyāghrī-jātaka*

- Introduction to Jātaka literature
- **Sanskrit Text paragraphs 1-10:** Guide to the text and translation of the selected passages with grammatical analysis.

Lecture 10: *vyāghrī-jātaka*

- **Sanskrit Text paragraphs 11-25:** Guide to the text and translation of the selected passages with grammatical analysis.

Lecture 11: *śibi-jātakam*

- **Sanskrit Text paragraphs 1-12:** Guide to the text and translation of the selected passages with grammatical analysis.

Lecture 12: *śibi-jātakam*

- **Sanskrit Text paragraphs 13-25:** Guide to the text and translation of the selected passages with grammatical analysis

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

Reading materials will be provided by the course instructor through Moodle before the classes.

Texts books (only selected chapters)

Aṣṭasāhasrikā prajñāpāramitā (ed.) Vaidya, P. L. The Mithila Institute of Post-Graduate Studies and Research in Sanskrit Learning. 1960. (**The first chapter only**).

Mahāyāna-sūtra-saṃgrahaḥ (part 1) (ed.) Vaidya, P. L. The Mithila Institute of Post-Graduate Studies and Research in Sanskrit Learning. 1961. (***Prajñāpāramitāhṛdayasūtram***).

Mahāyāna-sūtra-saṃgrahaḥ (part 1) (ed.) Vaidya, P. L. The Mithila Institute of Post-Graduate Studies and Research in Sanskrit Learning. 1961. (***vajracchedikā prajñāpāramitā***).

Jātakamālā (ed.) Vaidya, P. L. The Mithila Institute of Post-Graduate Studies and Research in Sanskrit Learning, 1959. (***vyāghrī-jātakam*** and ***śibi-jātakam***).

Reference books

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

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

Edgertonm Franklin. (1953). *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*. Vol. I & II. Indian Reprint, 2004.

Kale, Moreshwar R. (1884). *A Higher Sanskrit Grammar*. Indian Reprint 1977.

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

Speijer, J.S. (1998). *Sanskrit Syntax*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.

Whitney, William D. (1885). *The Roots, Verb-forms and Primary Derivatives of Sanskrit Language*. Reprinted by Motilal Banarsidass, 1973.

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