

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

ELECTIVES  
(OPEN TO ALL FACULTIES)

BSTC3041 Sanskrit language IV

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

**Course Description**

Sanskrit, one of the most ancient languages, is studied by scholars of language, religion, literature, history, and anthropology, as well as anyone who is interested in Indian and Buddhist cultural heritage. It is one of the three languages in which Buddhist teachings are preserved. Indian Buddhist schools such as Sarvāstivāda, Yogācāra, Mādhyamikā, and Indian Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna composed their texts in Sanskrit. Therefore, reading about Sanskrit is essential for students who intend to specialize in different aspects of Buddhism. Students of Buddhist philosophy and history will discover that knowledge of the Sanskrit language greatly enriches their studies. This course is designed for students who wish to read and comprehend Buddhist Sanskrit texts and employ Sanskrit Buddhist resources for their future research.

**Prerequisite: “BSTC3040. Sanskrit language III” or possess equivalent knowledge**

**Course Content**

The course mainly concentrates on the selected passages from the *Sthiramati's commentary on Triṃśīkārikā of Vasubandhu (Triṃśīkāvijñaptibhāṣyaṃ)*, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyaṃ* (Commentary on the Abhidharmakośa) the *Buddhacarita* by Aśvaghoṣa and the *Mahāvastu*. As the course proceeds, gradually and systematically, advanced grammatical structures employed in Sanskrit Buddhist commentarial literature and poetry literature will be introduced.

The pedagogy behind this selection of these readings is that these four texts represent three different genres of Buddhist Sanskrit literature. The first two is a commentarial literature that demonstrates the style and techniques of the Buddhist Sanskrit commentarial literature, and in terms of doctrine, it is one of the important texts of the Yogācāra Buddhism elucidating the three natures of realities. The *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyaṃ* is often described as a compendium of Buddhist philosophy, and its influence is visible in the development of many Buddhist schools of thought. The *Buddhacarita* is an epic poem in the Sanskrit *mahākāvya* style on the life of Gautama Buddha by Aśvaghoṣa composed in the early second century CE. It elucidates the style of Sanskrit poetry, and the last, the *Mahāvastu*, represents Sanskrit Avadāna literature. The Mahāvastu contains prose and verse written in mixed Sanskrit, Pāli, and Prakrit. It is believed to have been compiled between the 2nd century BCE and 4th

century CE. Doctrinally, The *Mahāvastu* is considered a primary source for the notion of a transcendent Buddha, common to all Mahāsāṃghika schools.

### **Expected Learning Outcome**

1. At the end of this course, students are expected to be able to read and comprehend classical Sanskrit Buddhist literature.
2. Students learn to examine and investigate Buddhist teachings from different perspectives.
3. Understand the development of Buddhist thoughts.
4. Students can utilize Sanskrit Buddhist sources for their future research.

### **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).
  - 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](http://arts.hku.hk/grade_expectations.pdf)

### **Detailed Lecture outlines:**

**Lectures 1 – 2:** Selected passages from the *Sthiramati's Triṃśikāvijñaptibhāṣyam*

#### **Lecture 1 :**

- Introduction to the course
- **The Sanskrit text section dealing with the two extremes from the Yogācāra perspective:** Guide to the text and translation of the selected passages with grammatical analysis.

#### **Lecture 2:**

- **The Sanskrit text section deals with the superimposition of self and *dharma* (*ātmadharmopacāraḥ*):** Guide to the text and translation of the selected passages with grammatical analysis.

#### **Lecture 3 :**

- **The Sanskrit text dealing with mind only (*viññaptimatratā*):** Guide to the text and translation of the selected passages with grammatical analysis.

**Lecture 4 :**

- **The Sanskrit text section dealing with rejection of external phenomena (*dharmā*):** Guide to the text and translation of the selected passages with grammatical analysis.

**Lecture 5 :**

- **The Sanskrit texts section dealing with the significance of *ālayavijñānaṃ*:** Guide to the text and translation of the selected passages with grammatical analysis.

**Lecture 6:**

- **The Sanskrit texts section dealing with the three-nature theory of Yogācāra:** Guide to the text and translation of the selected passages with grammatical analysis.

**Lecture 7-9** Selected passages from the *Mahāvastu Avadāna part 1*

**Lecture 7 :**

- **chapter I: Story of Maugalyāyana's visit to hell, Sanskrit text 4-6:** Guide to the text and translation of the selected passages with grammatical analysis.
- Mid-term quiz

**Lecture 8 :**

- **chapter I: Story of Maugalyāyana's visit to hell, Story of Maugalyāyana's visit to hell, Sanskrit text 7-9:** Guide to the text and translation of the selected passages with grammatical analysis.

**Lecture 9 :**

- **chapter I: Story of Maugalyāyana's visit to hell, Sanskrit text 10-15:** Guide to the text and translation of the selected passages with grammatical analysis.

**Lectures 10-12:** the first chapter of *Buddhacarita*

**Lecture 10 :**

- **Story of the birth of the Buddha, Sanskrit Verses 1-6:** Guide to the text and translation of the selected passages with grammatical analysis.

**Lecture 11 :**

- **Story of the birth of the Buddha, Sanskrit Verses 7-14:** Guide to the text and translation of the selected passages with grammatical analysis.

**Lecture 12: Story of the birth of the Buddha, Sanskrit Verses 7-14:** 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 and interest.

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

### **Textbooks (only selected chapters).**

- Buddhacarita* (ed.), Schotsman, Irma. Sarnath: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies. 1995. (first chapter only).
- Buescher, Hartmut (2007) *Sthimamati's Triṃśikāvijñaptibhāṣya: Critical Edition of the Sanskrit Texts and its Tibetan Translation*. Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, ÖAW, *Mahāvastu Avadāna* (Vol, I ). (ed.). Par É. Senart. Paris Imprimerie Nationale. 1882 (The first chapter only).
- Vasubandhu: Abhidharmakosa-bhāṣya* (rev. 2nd ed.) Pradhan P. Patna: K.P. Jayaswal Research Center, 1975. (*prathamam kośasthānam* only).

### **Reference books**

- Bucknell, R.S. (1994). *Sanskrit Manual: A quick-reference guide to the phonology and grammar of Classical Sanskrit*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.
- Dhammajoti, Kuala Lumpur (2015). *Reading Buddhist Sanskrit Texts: An Elementary Grammatical Guide* (3<sup>rd</sup> 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>