Reading list for entering Sanskrit B.A. students (last updated 26.08.2022)

Preparation for language study

Students are not expected to have any knowledge of the Sanskrit language before starting the course. However, the Elementary Sanskrit course is fast moving, and you will be expected to start using Devanagari, the script in which Sanskrit is usually printed, from the outset. You are therefore recommended to familiarise yourself with Devanagari prior to the start of the course if at all possible. Besides the Sanskrit coursebooks mentioned below, we recommend Lambert's *Introduction to the Devanagari Script* (https://archive.org/details/in.gov.ignca.3374); there are also numerous online resources, including http://prakrit.info/vrddhi/lessons/02/.

The course books which will be required for the Elementary Sanskrit course include Coulson's *Complete Sanskrit* (formerly *Teach Yourself Sanskrit)* and Macdonell's *A Sanskrit Grammar for Students.* You are recommended to obtain copies of these books prior to the start of the course. Other course books and materials will be provided during the classes.

A basic knowledge of English grammar, and standard grammatical terms, is also highly valuable for students starting this course. Sanskrit is taught here with the "grammar and translation" method, which makes use of advances in the disciplines of historical linguistics and philology over the last two centuries. A knowledge of the terminology of these sciences of language is essential to learning Sanskrit as it is taught in Oxford, and proves especially useful in studying the earlier layers of Sanskrit literature, the Vedas.

For students who have not encountered this terminology before, or the conception of language that lies behind it, mastering it while trying to learn Sanskrit presents an extra burden. Sanskrit has a many inflected forms - a lot of declensions of nouns and adjectives and a lot of conjugations of verbs. A significant part of the Elementary Sanskrit course is taken up with memorizing them. To have a template into which to fit these inflections can help enormously; it can make the difference between struggling and progressing with confidence.

Students will therefore benefit from familiarizing themselves with the basics of English grammar and grammatical terminology - and more generally how language works - before the start of the course. It will be helpful to remember, for example, what it means that the subject and verb of a sentence agree in number and person; what it means that verbs also have tenses, moods, and voices, and that nouns and adjectives also have case and gender. It will be useful to remember what a participle, a gerund, a pronoun, and a subordinate clause are. And so on. Of course, some students will already be familiar with this terminology, but there is always more to learn. A useful online resource with which you can begin your review is the "Introduction to Traditional Grammar," sections 1 and 2, available on the WPWT website at Southampton University (http://www.soton.ac.uk/~wpwt/notes/grammar.htm). For a slightly more detailed overview, Chapters 2, 3, 5, 6, 8 and 9 of *All about language* by Barry Blake provide useful introductions to many of the concepts and terminology that you need to know

when studying Sanskrit. Jespersen's *Essentials of English Grammar* (https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.16842/mode/2up) is also recommended.

Indian History, Culture, and Literature

Alongside language study, you will also begin to study ancient Indian history, culture and literature. Ancient India has a long history, many complex cultures, and extensive literature; there is therefore a lot to learn. You should obtain and read the following before the start of the course:

Fuller, Christopher. *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India*. Rev. ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Keay, Jonathan. *India Discovered: The Recovery of a Lost Civilization*. 3rd ed. London: HarperCollins, 2001.

Ramanujan, A. K. "Is There an Indian Way of Thinking? An Informal Essay," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 23, no. 1 (1989): 41–58. (download)

Trautmann, Thomas. *India: Brief History of a Civilization*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

A more extensive first year reading list is provided below, and you may also like to read some of the books on that list before starting your course.

We also recommend reading some novels or travelogues set in India, for a less formal introduction to Indian culture and cultural history:

Travelogues:

Bīrūnī, Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad. *Alberuni's India*. Edited by Ainslie Thomas Embree. Translated by Eduard Sachau. Abr. ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1971.

Dalrymple, William. *City of Djinns: a year in Delhi*. London: Flamingo, 2004.

Mehta, Suketu. *Maximum City: Bombay lost and found*. London: Review, 2005.

Saran, Mishi. *Chasing the Monk's Shadow: A Journey in the Footsteps of Xuanzang*. Delhi: Penguin, Viking, 2012.

Shulman, David. *Spring, Heat, Rains: A South Indian Diary*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Novels:

Anand, Mulk Raj. *Coolie*. London: Penguin Books, 1993.

Chandra, Vikram. *Red Earth and Pouring Rain*. London: Faber, 2000.

Desani, G.V. *All about H. Hatterr: a novel*. Re. ed. New York: New York Review Books, 2007.

Kipling, Rudyard. *Kim*. Edited by Zohreh T. Sullivan. New York: W.W. Norton, 2002.

Narayan, R.K. *The Bachelor of Arts*. London: Vintage, 2000.

Narayan, R.K. *The Guide*. New York: Penguin Books, 2006.

Raja Rao. *Kanthapura*. 2nd ed. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989.

There are also many modern translations of Sanskrit texts available. Several Sanskrit works have been translated as part of Oxford University Press' *Oxford World's Classics* series, for example *The Recognition of Śakuntalā, the Upaniṣads, the Pañcatantra, the Sauptikaparvan of the Mahābhārata, the Lives of the Jain Elders.* There are also translations in the Penguin Classics series, including *the Bhagavadgītā, the Mahābhārata* (abridged), *the Laws of Manu.* Any volumes from the Clay Sanskrit Library (here) or the Murthy Classical Library (here) series are also recommended.

First Year Reading List

The following is a list of books and articles which will help you to begin to develop an understanding of Indian history, religion, culture and literature. We recommend that you read one (or more) from each section. (*-ed books are recommended as a start.)

Histories of India:

Basham, A.L. *The Wonder that was India*. 3rd ed. London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1967. (N.B. certain parts are out of date, e.g. on the Aryan Invasion.)

Dalrymple, William. *The Anarchy: the Relentless Rise of the East Indian Company*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019.

Kulke , Hermann and Dietmar Rothermund. *A History of India*, 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 1986.

Lahiri, Nayanjot. *Ashoka in Ancient India*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015

Thapar, Romila. *The Penguin History of Early India From the Origins to AD 1300*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2002.

*Trautmann, Thomas. *India: Brief History of a Civilization.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Hinduism:

*Brockington, John. *The Sacred Thread: Hinduism in its Continuity and Diversity*. 2nd ed. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996.

Flood, Gavin. *An Introduction to Hinduism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

*Fuller, Christopher. *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India*. Rev. ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Buddhism:

Gethin, Rupert. *The Foundations of Buddhism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

*Rahula, Walpola Sri. *What the Buddha Taught*. Re. ed. New York: Grove/Atlantic, 2007.

Williams, Paul, Anthony Tribe, and Alexander Wynne. *Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2012.

Jainism:

Cort, John E. *Framing the Jina: Narratives of Icons and Idols in Jain History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Dundas, Paul. *The Jains*. 2nd ed. London & New York: Routledge, 2002.

Histories of Indological Studies:

Allen, Charles. *The Buddha and Dr. Führer: An Archaeological Scandal*. London: Haus Publishing, 2008.

Lahiri, Nayanjot. *Finding Forgotten Cities: How the Indus Civilization Was Discovered*. London: Seagull Books.

Rocher, Rosane, and Ludo Rocher. *The Making of Western Indology: Henry Thomas Colebrooke and the East India Company*. New York: Routledge, 2012.

India’s Environment:

Corbett, Jim. *Jungle Lore*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Corbett, Jim. *My India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press,1952.

Dave, K.N. *Birds in Sanskrit Literature.* Rev. ed. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2005. (download)

Rangarajan, Mahesh. *Oxford Anthology of Indian Wildlife*. 2 vols. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Mahesh Rangarajan, *India’s Wildlife History: An Introduction.* Delhi: Permanent Black, 2017.

Trautmann, Thomas. *Elephants and Kings: an Environmental History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.