

17TH SUMMER SCHOOL OF SPOKEN SANSKRIT, INSTITUTE OF SOUTH ASIA, HEIDELBERG UNIVERSITY

The 17th Annual Summer School of Spoken Sanskrit took place at Heidelberg University from August 1st to August 26th 2016. It was organised by the Department of Cultural and Religious History of South Asia (Classical Indology) at the Institute of South Asia. All seventeen summer schools of Spoken Sanskrit were guided by Dr. Sadananda Das (Institute of Indology, Leipzig University), who is a speaker and an experienced teacher of Sanskrit.

Sanskrit is one of the official languages of India and is perfectly suitable for any type of modern communication, from day-to-day to specialised and scientific. From the point of view of Indo-European linguistics, the study of Sanskrit is of fundamental importance. Any thorough historical and comparative research of any branch of the Indo-European language family is impossible without substantial knowledge of Sanskrit. With the help of Sanskrit, a linguist acquires the base for understanding the evolution of many Indo-European languages, and in this regard the significance of Sanskrit is still unrivaled.

A thorough knowledge of Devanagari and the basic grammar of Sanskrit were necessary prerequisites for participation in the Summer School. First, one should be familiar with the most frequent paradigms and have good reading skills, e.g. within the limits of Michael Coulson's *Teach yourself Sanskrit*. The course included a revision of basic grammar and vocabulary, an introduction of the main mnemonic techniques and methods of recitation, reading training texts in modern Sanskrit, explaining and singing *subhaṣitas* (सुभाषितानि, literally "well-said", poetic and philosophical aphorisms that are chanted with specific melodies). Course participants were given diverse textbooks and study materials. The main textbook was *Vempaṭi Kuṭumbaśāstrī. Saṃskṛtasvādhyāyaḥ. Nava Dehalī: Rāṣṭriyasamskṛtasamsthānam*, 2016 (with supplements). This textbook covers basic morphology, introduces elementary vocabulary and focuses on usage patterns, allowing students to quickly memorise the material. An important advantage of this textbook is its systematicity, exhibited in the way that it introduces grammar in a logically coherent fashion that is typical of classical language textbooks. As for dictionaries, we mostly used the online version of Monier-Williams' Sanskrit-English dictionary as well as the online Spoken Sanskrit dictionary¹.

Classes took place every day except Sunday, from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M., except Wednesday and Saturday when the classes lasted four academic hours. Twenty participants attended

¹ Available at: <http://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/monier/>; <http://spokensanskrit.de> (13.04.2017). A practical advantage of the latter is that it allows the user to search verbs not by roots but by the 3 person sg. forms and does not require to strictly follow the orthography.

the School. They were mostly undergraduates, graduate students and teachers specialising in Indology. It should be noted that the number of applicants exceeded the number of places, as the admission process was competitive. The origins of the participants were varied and included Italy, Germany, Denmark, Japan, China, Sri-Lanka, and Russia. All students of the Summer School already had substantial knowledge of India and Nepal, many of them study Sanskrit and Indology as degree subjects. It is worth mentioning that professors and scholarly supervisors of some of the participants had themselves taken part in the preceding summer schools led by Dr. Sadananda Das.

The principal feature of the School was its orientation towards the active spoken use of Sanskrit. The grammatical and lexical material was practised by developing dialogues and small stories about everyday life. By the end of the course, participants were really able to talk in Sanskrit. The instruction was entirely in Sanskrit, however, due to specific teaching techniques, the students managed to learn the topics covered well, as long as they were familiar with paradigms and minimum vocabulary.

Another significant feature of the course was a variety of teaching media and techniques. The classes were not limited to text reading. They usually began with a short conversation in Sanskrit between the teacher and each of the students; then, new grammar material was introduced and practised. After this, students listened to songs in Sanskrit (lyrics were also available) followed by the reading and explanation of *subhāṣitas*. Classes ended in a discussion in Sanskrit in small groups on topics related to the grammatical and lexical material studied during the session. A film in Sanskrit about life in India was also shown. To illustrate real-life conversation in Sanskrit, the teacher made a Skype videocall to an Australian professor and talked in Sanskrit with him. Certain difficulties in comprehension arose when the teacher was explaining the meaning of *subhāṣitas*. However, while simple reading of Sanskrit texts with a dictionary without a teacher is possible, the oral explanation of *subhāṣitas* offered by an experienced speaker of Sanskrit is more valuable.

Subhāṣitas were selected to illustrate and internalise the grammatical topic studied. As an example, let us cite four *subhāṣitas* that respectively illustrate the paradigm of the noun गुरु: 'guru', the use of the instrumental case, relative adverbs and the imperative²:

गुरुरेव गतिर्गुरुमेव भजे

गुरुणैव सहास्मि नमो गुरवे ।

न गुरोः परमं शिशुरस्मि गुरो-

र्मतिरस्तु गुरो मम पाहि गुरो ॥

My guru is (my) path, I take resort to my guru.
I am always with my guru, I bow down to my guru.
There is nothing higher than a guru, I am a child of (my) guru,
Let my mind be merged in the guru. O guru! protect me.

² *Subhāṣita-Maṇjarī*. A Selection of One Hundred One *Subhāṣitas* with English Translation / Sadananda Das, ed. Allahabad, 2015.

शशिना च निशा निशया च शशी

शशिना निशया च विभाति नभः ।

पयसा कमलं कमलेन पयः

पयसा कमलेन विभाति सरः ॥

Beautiful is the night by the moon, and the moon by the night,
And the sky is beautiful by both the moon and the night.
Beautiful is the lotus by the water and the water by the lotus,
And the pond is beautiful by both the water and the lotus.

यदा किञ्चिज्ज्ञो ऽहं गज इव मदन्धः समभवं

तदा सर्वज्ञो ऽस्मीत्यभवदवलितं मम मनः ।

यदा किञ्चित् किञ्चिद् बुधजनसकाशादवगतं

तदा मूर्खो ऽस्मीति ज्वर इव मदो मे व्यपगतः ॥

When I knew but a little, I was blinded by pride, as an elephant is by rut;
Then, with my mind so stained I thought, “I am all-knowing”.
When slowly I learnt something from the presence of wise men,
Then like a fever my pride was subdued and I knew, I was a fool.

मा गा इत्यपमङ्गलं ब्रज इति स्नेहेन हीनं वच-

सतिष्ठेति प्रभुता यथारुचि कुप्येषाप्युदासोनता ।

किं ते साम्प्रतमाचराम उचितं तत्सोपचारं वच-

स्मर्तव्या वयमेव तत्र भवता यावत्पुनर्दश्रनम् ॥

To say “don’t go” is inauspicious; “go” lacks love.
“Stay” shows mastery; “do as you like” shows indifference.
Whatever politeness we shall show now will be merely a formality,
(However,) you may remember us until our next meeting.

The following grammar topics were thoroughly studied: all cases and numbers of *a*-, *ā*-, *i*-stems and of the pronouns सः, तत्, सा ‘that’, एषः, एतत्, एषा ‘this’; conjugation of thematic and most frequent athematic verbs in the present indicative active; active imperative; past passive participle and participle in -*vān*; future tense; all

forms of the absolutive (नीबा, उक्ता, स्थिता, उत्थाय, etc.); the infinitive; numerals; the complementation of several common verbs (रोचते 'like', स्निह्यति 'be fond of', क्रुध्यति 'be angry', कुप्यति 'be angry', ईर्ष्यति 'envy', बिभेति 'be afraid'). It should be noted that nouns not belonging to the above-mentioned declension types (i.e. *i*-, *u*-stems, athematic stems), athematic verbs and, on the whole, words with less frequent inflection were avoided in exercises and dialogues. Thus, instead of e.g. पिता 'father', माता 'mother', दुहिता 'daughter', the nouns जनकः, जननी, पुत्री were selected.

In presenting vocabulary, particular attention was paid to such topics as polite forms of address; greetings and other conventional phrases; daily routines; words for jobs, animals, vegetables, fruits, flowers, sciences; words for days of the week; time and date expressions; most common interrogative patterns; space and time adverbs; examples of neologisms in Sanskrit, such as विश्वजालम् 'Internet' ('universe' + 'net'), जालभूमिः 'website' ('net' + 'area'), विद्युत्पत्रम् 'email' ('electricity' + 'letter').

The culmination of the Summer School was an impressive performance that included a play in Sanskrit and *subhāṣitas* sung before an audience consisting of teachers, researchers and students of the Institute of South Asia. After the performance, Prof. Axel Michaels, Head of Department of Classical Indology, presented certificates to the participants of the Summer School.

High-quality lodging and entertainment was provided to the participants. They were accommodated on the university campus in close proximity of the Institute of South Asia. They were shown around the library of the Institute, invited to an excursion around Heidelberg city centre and to Heidelberg castle. At the end of the course, the participants were invited to a dinner consisting of dishes of Indian cuisine.

On the whole, the Summer School was an excellent and enjoyable chance to cultivate the knowledge of Sanskrit in a comfortable academic environment. Dr. Das is an excellent teacher with an engaging personality. However, the Summer School would not be suitable for beginners. It is the activation and internalisation of previously acquired grammatical and lexical skills that make up the objective of the course.

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