



**A Practical  
Sanskrit  
Introductory**

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# Preface

This course of fifteen lessons is intended to lift the English-speaking student who knows nothing of Sanskrit, to the level where he can intelligently apply Monier-Williams' dictionary<sup>1</sup> and the **Dhātu-Pāṭha**<sup>2</sup> to the study of the scriptures.

The first five lessons cover the pronunciation of the basic Sanskrit alphabet, together with its written form in both **Devanāgarī** and transliterated Roman: flash cards are included as an aid. The notes on pronunciation are largely descriptive, based on mouth position and effort, with similar English (Received Pronunciation) sounds offered where possible. The next four lessons describe vowel embellishments to the consonants, the principles of conjunct consonants, and additions to and variations in the **Devanāgarī** alphabet. Lessons ten and eleven present **sandhi** in grid form and explain their principles in sound. The next three lessons penetrate Monier-Williams' dictionary through its four levels of alphabetical order, and suggest strategies for finding difficult words. The last lesson shows the extraction of the **artha** from the **Dhātu-Pāṭha**, and the application of this and the dictionary to the study of the scriptures.

In addition to the primary course, the first eleven lessons include a 'B' section which introduces the student to the principles of sentence structure in this fully inflected language. Six declension paradigms and class-1 conjugation in the present tense are used with a minimal vocabulary of nineteen words. In the 'B' part of lessons ten and eleven the principles of compound words are introduced.

The course aims at a practical understanding of the basic principles, at getting a 'feel' for the language, and not a learning of rules by rote. To this end, each lesson concludes with exercises for the student to put that understanding into practice: answers to the exercises are presented in an appendix.

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<sup>1</sup> Monier-Williams *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* is currently published by both Motilal Banarsidass in India and Oxford University Press in England: although the two are printed from the same plates, the latter is far superior in the quality of printing, paper, and binding—and this is reflected in its much higher price.

<sup>2</sup> The edition of the *Dhātupāṭha* referred to in these notes is that edited by J.L. Shastri and published by Motilal Banarsidass: it is a small book and quite inexpensive.

The pronunciation offered in these lessons is optimised for the English-speaking student to understand the underlying principles of **sandhi** (sound changes).

There are several variations in the pronunciation of some of the Sanskrit sounds, that have been handed down over generations. None of these traditions are wrong, although this may confuse the mind trained to think in terms of opposites, of right and wrong. Consider the English spoken in Britain and America for example: they are certainly different, but neither is wrong.

Where there is a variation in the form of a character (e.g. अ or ऌ), these lessons standardize on the form that is most commonly used in currently available printed editions of the **Bhagavad Gītā** and **Upaniṣads**. The common variations are illustrated in the ninth lesson.

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In the English-speaking world there is currently little appreciation of the value of studying formal grammar: as a result it has become unpopular, and many schools have ceased to teach it. In view of this situation, an appendix of basic English grammatical terms is included.

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Readers are invited to point out errors in the course, and offer suggestions for its improvement.

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## INVOCATION

## तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु

Translations:

- Effective may our study prove! ..... (Invocation to *Dakṣiṇāmūrti Upaniṣad*, A.M.Sastry)  
 May our study be thorough and fruitful. .... (Invocation to *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, Swāmī Śarvānanda)  
 Let what we are studying be invigorating. .. (Invocation to *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, Swāmī Gambhīrānanda)  
 May our study be vigorous and effective. .... (Invocation to *Taittirīya 2.1*, Swāmī Śarvānanda)  
 Let our study be brilliant. .... (Invocation to *Taittirīya 2.1*, Swāmī Gambhīrānanda)  
 May our study be full of light. .... (First Lessons in Sanskrit, Judith Tyberg)

पदानि ॥ तेजस्वि नौ अधीतम् अस्तु ॥

तेजस्वि । neuter nominative singular of adjective *tejasvin*.

*tejasvin* —MW 454c mfn. brilliant, splendid, bright, energetic.

[Pāṇini: बहुलं छन्दसि ॥ ५ । २ । १२२ ॥ In the *Veda* the affix *-vin* is variously introduced in the sense of *matup* ('belonging to this', 'existing in this').]

*tejas* —sharp (edge of a knife); point or top of flame or ray, glow, glare, splendour, brilliance, light, fire;

√*tij*—MW 446a to be or become sharp.

Dh.P.—तिज भ्वादिगण आत्मनेपद सेट् । निशाने ।

*niśāna*—MW 561a n. sharpening, whetting; observing, perceiving.

**Comment:** *Tejas* is a name given to the subtle element of fire, having qualities of heat and light. With reference to our study of Sanskrit, this may be understood as the heat that burns off the dross of ignorance and allows the light of understanding to shine through.

नौ । genitive dual of personal pronoun 'I', giving the meaning 'of us both (student and teacher)', or simply 'our',

अधीतम् । neuter nominative singular of *adhītam*. (The past passive participle used in the sense of an abstract noun.)

*adhīta*—MW 22c mfn. attained, studied, read; well-read, learned.

*adhi-*√*i*, to turn the mind towards, observe, understand.

*adhi*—MW 20b prefix expressing above, over and above, besides.

√*i*—to go, walk; to flow; to blow; to advance, spread, get about; to go to or towards, come; ... to succeed, to arrive at, reach, obtain; ... to undertake anything; to be employed in, go on with, continue in any condition or relation ...

Dh.P.—इक् अदादिगण आत्मनेपद अनिट् । स्मरणे ।

*smaraṇa*—MW 1272b n. the act of causing to remember, reminding, calling to mind.

Dh.P.—इङ् अदादिगण परस्मैपद अनिट् । अध्ययने ।

*adhyayana*—MW 22c n. reading, studying, especially the *Vedas*.

Dh.P.—इङ् अदादिगण परस्मैपद अनिट् । गतौ ।

*gati*—MW 347c f. going, moving, gait, deportment, motion in general.

अस्तु । first person singular imperative of √*as* (to be), i.e. 'let it be', 'may it be', or simply 'be!'

√*as*—MW 117a to be, live, exist, be present, take place, happen.

Dh.P.—अस अदादिगण परस्मैपद सेट् । भुवि ।

*bhū*—MW 760c f. the act of arising or becoming.

Treating *adhītam* as a neuter noun and *tejasvi* its complement, this gives a rather plodding translation of 'Let our study be bright'. Using poetic licence to convey the sense of the whole, rather than the literal word-by-word translation, we have:

“May the Light<sup>†</sup> Shine upon our Studies.”

<sup>†</sup> The light of understanding/knowledge/truth.

