The Cambridge Introduction to Sanskrit

Bilingual Edition

A. M. Ruppel


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Learning Sanskrit is usually considered to be a harrowing experience what with the memorization of grammar and the language's various verb and noun forms in numerous tenses (such as the vocative case). This has discouraged many students from completing the study of Sanskrit and most leave it halfway. Every textbook that tries to solve this problem ends up creating another one, so it seems! The Cambridge Introduction to Sanskrit comes as a welcome relief and is an excellent tool for learning Sanskrit.

In The Cambridge Introduction to Sanskrit, A. M. Ruppel, a Sanskrit teacher of rich experience, assures the student that one can minimize "the need for rote memorization" (1). The many innovations in this book start with the first chapter being numbered "0" rather than "1." This is a Sanskrit textbook and a user-friendly computer manual bundled into one.

The introduction by Ruppel is clear and concise about expectations from teachers and students, and also outlines study techniques, that are immensely helpful in bringing the student to easily grasp the intricacies of Sanskrit grammar. Throughout the book, examples are taken from important Sanskrit literature, like the Ramayana and the Bhagavad Gita, and so the student becomes familiar with many texts in the course of learning. Every minor detail of the language that is particularly useful for Anglophone students is provided, so that the chances of the student making an error are minimized. This book is an excellent resource for students who want to learn Sanskrit.
minimized. For example, in the lessons on translation, Ruppel gives a good sense of the vastness of
the meanings of a single word and the various nuances with which a word might be used.

The root forms of all nouns and verbs are shown, which helps the student to understand the
various forms that a root can take, sometimes overwhelmingly, in Sanskrit. The nature of different
kinds of stems is elaborately explained, assisting the student in understanding newer usages of
these stems in later studies.

The Cambridge Introduction to Sanskrit comes with useful appendices including practice handouts
for writing Sanskrit and also reference sections, including the background of the passages quoted in
the book; an index of grammatical terms; an introduction to Sanskrit meter; an introduction to
Vedic Sanskrit; lists of conjunct consonants, numerals, and compounds; and a Sanskrit-English
vocabulary. I am myself a teacher of Sanskrit and the quality of The Cambridge Introduction to
Sanskrit can be seen in the fact that I have dumped all other textbooks in this one's favor. The ease
of learning and teaching using this textbook cannot be overemphasized.

About the Reviewer(s):
Swami Narasimhananda is the editor of Prabuddha Bharata.

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A. M. Ruppel was the Townsend Senior Lecturer in the Greek, Latin and Sanskrit Languages at
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