

Editorial Reviews

Introduction to Sanskrit, by Thomas Egenes, Ph.D.

India Times

The India Times endorses this book and strongly recommends it for use by Sanskrit students. . . It is the finest textbook for beginners. —The India Times, February, 1992

Number One Introductory Sanskrit Text

Introduction to Sanskrit, by Prof. Thomas Egenes, is now undoubtedly the number one introductory Sanskrit text in use in the world today. —theosophy.net/hct/hct9703.pdf

A Useful Primer

A useful primer acceptable to all Sanskrit students, no matter what their orientation. It fills a real need in supplying an approach which does not rush past the all-important foundations of ample practice with simple sentences. —David Reigle, Sanskrit Professor

Student-friendly Text

A didactically well-structured and student-friendly text. After working through 18 chapters filled with clear explanations, study tips, exercises, diagrams, and vocabulary lists, you will be able to unravel classical Sanskrit texts in the original script. This book is for everybody who wants to become acquainted with the wealth of the Sanskrit literature and who does not want to depend completely on translations. Those who want to engage themselves in the study of this discipline will want to own this book.

—Prof. G. Van Haren, The Netherlands

Best Book on the Market

Whether you are a teacher or a student, this is best book on the market. It includes the alphabet, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. Both Devanagari script and transliteration are used. —sanskrit.bhaarat.com/Dale/Books

University of Colorado

I have been using Introduction to Sanskrit in my first-year class at the University of Colorado at Boulder. After an unhappy experiment with another first-year text, I have been very satisfied with this one. The students like it, and it works well for them.

—Susan Trip, University of Colorado

Introduction to Sanskrit, by Thomas Egenes

"Egenes is the best that I have seen" —IANC's Sanskrit Granthalaya Bookstore

Hinduism Today

If you're interested in do-it-at-home learning of basic Sanskrit, this is among the best books we've seen. It is calibrated to small learning steps with appropriate exercises. The descriptions of grammatical rules is clear. . . great place to start. —Hinduism Today, September, 1990

The One to Choose

Thomas Egenes's "Introduction to Sanskrit" seems the one to choose, judging from the reviews, which appear well-informed. —cs.vu.nl/~dick/Summaries/Misc/NatLang.html

Introduction to Sanskrit, by Thomas Egenes, Ph.D.

Parts 1 and 2. Introduction to Sanskrit, in two volumes is designed to open the self-teaching guide presents Sanskrit pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary in simple and systematic steps, allowing students to easily master the fundamentals of this enchanting language. The text gently leads the beginner through small steps with clear, concise explanations. Each lesson includes instruction in alphabet, grammar, and vocabulary, with easy practice exercises at the end. --This text refers to the Paperback edition. — Amazon.com

Excellent Introductory Book, July 14, 2000

Reviewer: Sherry Aldrich Sineath from Tallahassee, FL

This was an excellent introductory book on Sanskrit. It was obviously written by someone experienced in teaching Sanskrit, and sensitive to student input. It was easy to follow and repetitive enough to give the beginning student a certain sense of mastery as each new piece of information would build on the last. I highly recommend it for any beginning student who may have found the Coulson text entirely too overwhelming and confusing. — Amazon.com

Clear and Simple, May 10, 2000

Reviewer: Michelle M. Maynard from Boston, MA

Originally I had picked up Coulson's intro sanskrit book. I found it very difficult to understand, and as a result I gave up on learning Sanskrit. When I received Egenes book, I felt relieved and motivated because it was so clear and simple. When your learning a new language, it is important to keep things simple and to work in baby steps. Egenes book is simple and clear! — Amazon.com

Best choice, May 31, 1999

Reviewer: mcomas@cres.anu.edu.au from Canberra

I think I have looked at most of the available Sanskrit introductory books - Coulson, Goldberg, Apte, Rapid Sanskrit Method, etc, first as a student and now as a teacher. Egenes is the best that I have seen. It is clear, simple, well thought out. It uses English grammatical terms. The exercises are good, and the answers are at the back if you need them. The devanagari is big and clear.

My only reservations are that in the earlier edition, Egenes uses the nom. masc. singular ending -s, then has to explain it away a few chapters later. If you are learning or teaching Sanskrit, this is definitely the best choice. Amazon.com

Excellent Sanskrit Pre-Primer, July 22, 2002

Reviewer: A reader from California

Egenes' book is excellent as a pre-primer. It presents enough information in its 18 lessons to give the beginning Sanskritist a firm foundation for progressing to a more difficult Sanskrit primer. Covered are the basic uses of Classical Sanskrit's 8 cases; paradigms for 9 nominal declensions; a small list of verbs showing present, imperfect, future, and gerund forms; tables for external sandhi, and coverage of two internal sandhi rules. The introduction to the Devanagari script is excellent. It goes beyond other primers and shows you how to actually write the characters. Plus, the text is large and very easy to read. It is well-worth the price. — Amazon.com

Chinese Edition of Introduction to Sanskrit

Many thanks to Professor Thomas Egenes, the author of "Introduction to Sanskrit", for his support to translate into Chinese and publish it on Internet web.
—ucchusma.idv.tw/Sanskrit/sanskrit

Excellent

Initially I'm planning to stay close to the excellent "Introduction to Sanskrit Vol 1 & 2" by Thomas Egenes. I'm undertaking this now while I am still a relative beginner and in need of much repetition of vocabulary, verb conjugation and noun declensions etc. It may be that others will find it useful as well. — Barry McKay bmckay@sundaralokaH.net

Excellent Introductory Textbook

I feel that this is an excellent introductory textbook. This may be due to the fact that it is the one I am currently studying. Egenes is careful not to overload the student with all of the technicalities and exceptions to grammatical rules. He goes slow enough to not feel buried yet fast enough to accomplish a great deal. I also enjoy his readings which are drawn from scriptures such as the Veda, the Upanisads and the Gita.
—colorado.edu/religiousstudies

Editorial Reviews on Other Books

These reviews refer to Introduction to Sanskrit by Thomas Egenes

Bhagavad-Gita

Reviewer: from Niiza, Saitama

Readers who may be new to Sanskrit, and who would like to get a bit of grounding in the language before approaching the Bhagavad Gita, might take a look at Thomas Egenes, 'Introduction to Sanskrit' (1989). There are many primers of Sanskrit on the market, but this is undoubtedly the best as not (like that, for example, of Michael Coulson) overloading the beginner with too much detail. It also has the additional merit of printing the Devanagari letters in a large clear font, something that will be appreciated by anyone who has ever attempted to learn this difficult script. — Amazon.com

Michael Coulson's Teach Yourself Sanskrit —How could a college (UT) have used this book? August 15, 2000

Reviewer: Lawrence Sutherland from Austin, TX

This book failed me. The author writes in a style that, by today's casual standards, seems more suited to a highbrow English college (like the Cambridge of yesteryear). The font is terrifically small, the explanations didactic. . . Out of the 13 or so people in the Sanskrit class which used this text, only three failed to drop out; those three were already "linguistically accomplished" and could make some sense of it. In the beginning of the class, I handed everyone a sheet with the alphabet on it (not from the book); later, people said that without that favor, they'd have dropped out a lot sooner. I think Egenes or Bucknell's (sp?) book is probably a safer bet. I have Egenes' and I've gotten alot out of it. Or you can join the Sanskrit for Social Change movement (no kidding). Burn this book. —Amazon.com

Michael Coulson's Teach Yourself Sanskrit —I bought and returned this book!, May 12, 2000

Reviewer: Murali Sreenivasan from Tulsa, OK

This book is not meant for anybody to learn Sanskrit. It covers too many topics in too few pages. To make matters worse, quality of paper used in this book is really bad. Also, binding of the book is that of a cheap thriller and it is really hard to keep it open while reading.

One good thing about this book is that, all Exercises have their Solutions, and in my knowledge Egenes's "Introduction to Sanskrit" is the only other book on Introductory Sanskrit which provides the key to exercises. —Amazon.com

Michael Coulson's Teach Yourself Sanskrit — not the best Sanskrit primer, March 19, 2002

Reviewer: A reader from United States

Coulson's text is a nightmare to use if you don't already know some Sanskrit. I highly suggest starting off with Thomas Egenes "Introduction to Sanskrit, Part I." Egenes text consists of 18 concise but simple lessons which provide one with a foundation in basic Sanskrit for building upon with more a thorough text. (In fact, Egenes states that his text is a "pre-primer;" I have to say, it is a most excellent one.) Coulson's text becomes much easier to comprehend. —Amazon.com

Michael Coulson's Teach Yourself Sanskrit — This Book is Great if you have a PhD in Linguistics, January 26, 2002

Reviewer: Drew from LA, CA USA

This book is probably a great book if you a have a firm background in linguistics, but it is hardly a "beginners book". Its introduction to the script is also very confusing. I am going to exchange this book for Thomas Egenes book, everyone seems to say that it is much more suited for the beginner. —Amazon.com

Michael Coulson's Teach Yourself Sanskrit is a perverse production best avoided by beginners., September 4, 2001

Although Coulson's 'Teach Yourself Sanskrit' is, in many ways, an excellent and extremely thorough textbook, it is hardly suited to the average beginner. Most of us are drawn to Sanskrit because of a prior interest in The Bhagavad Gita, The Upanishads, The Mahabharata, The Ramayana, even The Hitopadesa. Coulson, however, has chosen - perversely it seems to me - to draw all of his examples from Sanskrit drama, a branch of Sanskrit literature which is of minimal interest to most readers. Even worse, he seems to have designed the book primarily for exceptionally gifted students, and for those who are already competent in an ancient inflected language such as Latin or Greek. His procedure, in other words, betrays an elitist attitude that has resulted in a book which, rather than teaching anyone Sanskrit, is far more likely to put them off for life. I gave up in despair about halfway through the book, and so have many others.

This is a pity, as Sanskrit is an exceptionally beautiful language, but there is a remedy at hand. Instead of wasting one's time with Coulson, the beginner would be far better off acquiring a copy of [Thomas Egenes](#) 'Introduction to Sanskrit' (2 volumes). Almost all introductory treatments of Sanskrit have been produced for linguists, but here finally is a truly practical and useful primer of Sanskrit for ordinary folks and human beings. After working one's way through it (and finding out why India really loves its sacred literature, epics, and wisdom stories), Coulson might be tackled with profit ... but not before.

—Amazon.com

Better alternatives now available

A reviewer, August 3, 1999

Since I first wrote a review of this book in Feb 1999, I have taught a Sanskrit course based on [Egenes](#)' Sanskrit textbook. I found Egenes' book rather better than Coulson, and would recommend it above this book. —Amazon.com

Judith M. Tyberg's First Lessons in Sanskrit Grammar and Reading

I was very disappointed with this book. The main problem is the Devanagari script is so small that it is barely legible, especially for a beginner. Strangely, the current edition has hand-written corrections in the margins! This book must have been quite an improvement on Lanman and Whitney when it was first published in the 1940s(?), but there are many better Sanskrit introductions available now, for example [Egenes](#). This book is of no use to me. I have put it away on a very high shelf. —Amazon.com

Mahabharata

So where are we? Clearly no ideal and complete English translation of the Mahabharata exists, nor is ever likely to exist given its stupendous size. Also, to really get a feeling for the magic of the Mahabharata, you have to read at least a bit of it in Sanskrit. A practical and user-friendly 'Introduction to Sanskrit' for ordinary folks (as opposed to academic linguists) is that of [Thomas Egenes](#) (1989). A few months work with this will soon find anyone reading at least some of the Sanskrit, in a bilingual edition such as Monier Williams' excellent 'Story of Nala,' with real enjoyment.

To conclude, if I had to choose between the Ganguli and van Buitenen, and although I'm grateful for both as both have much to offer, I would recommend Ganguli as being closer in spirit to the original - but I'd also suggest that those who are innocent of Sanskrit take a peek at Egenes. --This text refers to the Paperback edition. —Amazon.com