# Sanskrit Language and Literature (Module 1)

## Prof. Riccardo Ginevra

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***.

The course aims to provide basic training in the field of Indology, with specific reference to linguistic, literary and religious aspects. The primary teaching objective is to introduce students to the study of one of the two most ancient forms of Sanskrit – also known as Old Indic or Old Indo-Aryan – and to the reading and analysis of the texts of its rich literary tradition. This year the course will focus on what is known as Vedic (Sanskrit), the most ancient form (as opposed to Classical Sanskrit) in which the ancient sacred books (both in verse and in prose) of the Indic religious tradition, such as the *Rigveda* (collection of sacred hymns), *Atharvaveda* (collection of enchantments) and *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (ritual text), and many others were composed.

At the end of the course, students will be able to read texts in Sanskrit, carry out a basic linguistic, literary and religious analysis, and trace the roots of key words and concepts which are presently used in Italian and other European languages, such as *yoga, karma*, *dharma,* and *mantra.*

***COURSE CONTENT***

Module I

**Vedic: the language of the Vedas, the most ancient sacred texts of Indic tradition, and the Indic myth of the “Wounded Sun”**

Introduction to the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European linguistic family, its internal classification and outline of the history of Indo-Aryan languages. Grammar profile of Vedic and analysis of some processes which influence the transition from Proto-Indo-European to Proto-Indo-Iranian and from Proto-Indo-Iranian to Vedic, with particular reference to phonology, morphology and syntax.

Outline of the history of Indic literature and introduction to textual tradition in Vedic. Commented reading with the synchronic and historical-comparative analysis of poems and/or mythological topics in Vedic (provided by the lecturer in the original language and translated), with a specific focus on Indic myth of the “Wounded Sun” and to similar forms and themes in other Indo-European traditions, in particular in the Greek myth of “The Abduction of Persephone” and in the Scandinavian myth of “The Death of Baldr” – for the latter please see “Historical Linguistics (Module A): Germanic”.

***READING LIST***

The exam syllabus includes the lecture notes and all the material which is uploaded on the relevant online platform; the texts analysed during lectures will be provided by the lecturer (both in the original language and translated) during the course. Except for Module A’s translated home reading (full reading of the texts) the following items must only be used as reference and the relevant sections will be indicated during lessons:

1. For Language:

C. Della Casa, *Corso di sanscrito*, Unicopli, Milan, 2021.

S. Sani, *Grammatica sanscrita*, Fabrizio Serra, Pisa-Rome, 2012.

A. Aklujkar, *Corso di sanscrito*, Hoepli, Milan, 2012.

2. For Literature:

G. Boccali-S. Piano-S. Sani, *Le letterature dell’India*, UTET, Turin 2000.

S. W. Jamison-J. P. Brereton, *The Rigveda. The Earliest Religious Poetry of India*, Oxford University Press, Oxford-New York, 2014.

W. D. Whitney, *The Atharva-Veda Saṃhitā*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA), 1905.

3. For Religion:

A. Daniélou, *Miti e dèi dell'India*, BUR, Milan, 2002.

A. A. Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, Trübner, Strasbourg, 1897.

4. Translated home reading (full reading of the text):

S. Sani, *R̥gveda. Le strofe della sapienza*, Marsilio, Venice 2001.

P. M. Rossi, *Atharvaveda. Il Veda delle formule magiche*, Mimesis, Milan-Udine, 2020.

***TEACHING METHOD***.

Lectures will be held partly online and partly in-person (as scheduled), complemented by slides and material published also on the Blackboard platform.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

In the oral exam, students will have to answer questions on course topics and on recommended reading. The final assessment will not only be based on the accuracy of the knowledge acquired by students, but also on their reasoning skills and their capacity to discuss the various topics clearly and articulately, using the appropriate disciplinary lexicon. For example, the oral exam may include questions designed to assess students’ language proficiency, reading with translation, and the linguistic, literary and religious analysis of Sanskrit texts presented during lectures, as well the autonomous presentation by students of home reading.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

Being introductory, there are no knowledge prerequisites in order for students to attend the course, nor prerequites in terms of language proficiency and prior knowledge of the traditions covered during lectures.

The “Sanskrit Language and Literature (Module 1)” lectures, although totally separate, are structured in parallel with those of “Historical Linguistics (Module A): Germanic”, so as to facilitate the complementary learning of the two disciplines during the same semester.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board.