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Report from “The 15th Spoken Sanskrit Summer School” in Heidelberg

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From 4 – 29 August 2014 “The 15th Spoken Sanskrit Summer School” took place, organised by the Department of Classical Indology at the South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University.¹ This Summer School was attended by 20 people from different countries, most of whom were doctoral or M.A./B.A. students who studied not only Indian Philology, but also Linguistics, Anthropology, Philosophy or Buddhist Studies. The organisers of the entire project were Prof. Axel Michaels (Head of the Department of Classical Indology, Heidelberg University) and Dr Sadānanda Das (Institute of Indology and Central Asian Studies, University of Leipzig). Students from the South Asia Institute also helped a lot in the preparations for the summer school.

Classes were conducted by Dr. Sadānanda Das, a PhD graduate from the Centre of Advanced Study in Sanskrit, University of Pune in India. For twelve years (1993–2005) he worked as a research fellow in India – he was selected to teach (mostly spoken Sanskrit) in different parts of India. Dr. Das has also taught summer schools in spoken Sanskrit in several universities and institutions all over the world, for example in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Spain and Australia. Since 2005 he has been working as a lecturer in Sanskrit at the University of Leipzig, Germany.²

When it comes to the organisation of classes and the amount of tuition, there were 20 teaching sessions per week (90 min. per session). Classes were

¹More information on summer schools organised by the Department of Classical Indology at the South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University can be found under [this link](#).

²See: [[www 01](#)].

held from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, and from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Also, by participating in this course one could obtain 8 ECTS points.

The aims (the content of teaching) of the Spoken Sanskrit Summer School were to introduce students to the basic grammar and vocabulary of spoken Sanskrit (chosen for their practical value in everyday conversations) and to introduce students to basic mnemonic techniques and methods of recitation. Moreover, all participants were acquainted with some basic texts in spoken Sanskrit by the lecturer. All the necessary materials for this course were handed to us at the beginning of the Summer School. These included: five *Teach Yourself Samskrit* books with grammar, short stories written in Sanskrit and useful phrases, one comic book in Sanskrit, a Sanskrit–English dictionary and a collection of verses from a various Sanskrit poems, hymns and philosophical treatises. Beside this, the other purposes of the Summer School included: to create familiarity with the usage of spoken Sanskrit by actively involving students in discussions, dialogues, games and theatrical performances, and to memorise, understand and sing or chant *subhāṣitas* or “well said”, “well spoken” wise sayings, for example:

sukhārthī cet tyajed vidyām vidyārthī cet tyajet sukham |
sukhārthinaḥ kuto vidyā, kuto vidyārthinaḥ sukham ||

“A pleasure-seeker should give up learning and someone who wants learning should give up enjoyments. Where is learning for those who only want to enjoy, and where is enjoyment for those who want to study?”³

What is more, during the Summer School some special events took place. On 25 August a recital called *The origins of poetry – a recitation from the Rāmāyaṇa* was performed by Dr. Ananth Rao, an expert in *kathāpravacana* or the traditional style of storytelling (in Sanskrit). Dr. Rao’s performance narrated the story of the events leading to the genesis of poetry on the basis of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (a Sanskrit epic poem) in the popular verse-form known as *śloka*. A few days later, on 29 August, during the closing ceremony of Summer School 2014, a Sanskrit play (*The Cleverness of the Thief*) and Sanskrit *subhāṣitas* were performed by the participants under the guidance of Dr. Sadān-

³S. Das, *Subhāṣitamañjarī. A Selection of One Hundred Subhāṣitas with English Translation*, Allahabad 2008.



anda Das. The chief guest of this event was His Excellency Vijay Gokhale, Ambassador of India to Germany.

Note about the author

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