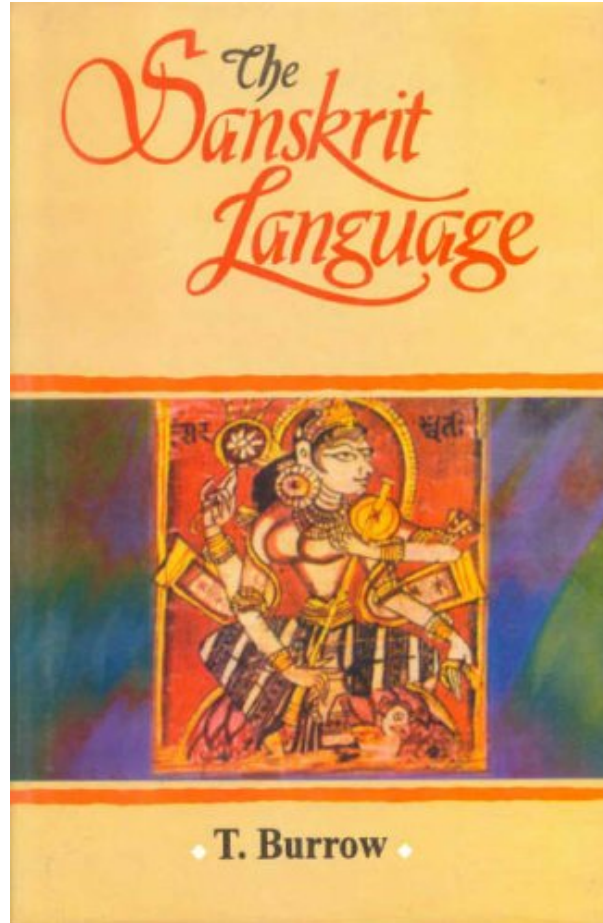


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Review

"... a pioneering work in the field of linguistics and Indology." -- --The Hindu

About the Author

Professor T. Burrow was an Indologist and the Boden Professor of Sanskrit at he University of Oxford from 1944 to 1976. He contributed to all the branches of philology, linguistics, and Dravidian studies. He was seminal thinker and collaborated with Professor M. Emeneau in the preparation of A Dravidian Etymological Dictionary a magnum opus in the study of Dravidian languages and Indology.

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The Sanskrit Language presents a systematic and comprehensive historical account of the developments in phonology and morphology. This is the only book in English which treats the structure of the Sanskrit language in its relation to the other Indo-European languages and throws light on the significance of the discovery of Sanskrit. It is this discovery that contributed to the study of the comparative philology of the Indo-European languages and eventually the whole science of modern linguistics. Besides drawing on the works of Brugmann and Wackernagel, Professor Burrow incorporates in this book material from Hittite and taking into account various verbal constructions as found in Hittite, he relates the perfect form of Sanskrit to it. The profound influence that the Dravidian languages had on the structure of the Sanskrit language has also been presented lucidly and with a balanced perspective. In a nutshell, the present work can be called, without exaggeration, a pioneering endeavour in the field of linguistics and Indology.

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A very friendly introduction to general Sanskrit themes for those with prior IE experience

By Christopher Culver

In the middle third of the 20th century, Faber and Faber published a splendid series called "The Great Languages" which were a rigorous but entertaining introduction to a number of languages from a diachronic perspective. Regrettably, the books were rarely distributed on the other side of the Atlantic, and fell swiftly out of print. T. Burrow's THE SANSKRIT LANGUAGE is a splendid example of the strengths of this series,

and while initially published in 1955, it saw a second edition in 1965 and then a major revised third edition in 1973. We are fortunate indeed that Motilal Banarsidass has restored it to print.

T. Burrow's description of the world of Sanskrit assumes some prior familiarity with comparative Indo-European linguistics, and some Greek and Latin is essential. The first several chapters do go over the basics of IE linguistics, but this is useful not as an introduction to the field, but more so that one can see what theoretical background Burrow works with. The major update in the third edition is that laryngeal theory and the lessons of Hittite and Mycenaean Greek are now taken into account throughout, which makes this a very contemporary-sounding book in spite of its publication several decades ago.

While the grammar of Sanskrit is covered exhaustively, it is not presented as an endless series of declension and conjugation tables meant for memorization. Instead, Burrow's book fills the void of an introduction to Sanskrit for IE linguists who want to know what it's like in general without really learning it to reading proficiency at the moment. But the book complements Sanskrit primers quite well, for out of the many Sanskrit textbooks I've encountered, Burrow's dedicates the most space by far to noun formation--exactly 100 pages. And the final chapter, "Loanwords in Sanskrit" is most revelatory, covering not only the well-known adoption of Dravidian lexical stock, but also late Bactrian Greek borrowings.

If you are a student of Indo-European linguistics interested in Sanskrit, Burrow's book is certainly worth tracking down. I very much enjoyed a presentation of diachronic grammar that is rigorous but at the same time doesn't assume the reader will memorize it all.

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