

# In Epithets Of Categories

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A SANSKRIT DICTIONARY OF LAW AND STATECRAFT  
Edited by Patrick Olivelle  
Primus Books, Delhi, 2015, pp. 448, ₹1595.00

The nature and purport of this book is clearly explained by its title. It is a dictionary in English of technical terms, legal, political and administrative, used in the Sanskrit language.

Such works on Sanskrit already exist for grammar and priestly rituals. The most recent are Abhyankar and Shukla's *A Dictionary of Grammar*, 1986, and Sen's *A Dictionary of Vedic Rituals*, 1978. The need for one on law, statecraft and political science prompted the present compilation, it being felt that technical terms on these subjects were not available sufficiently in standard Sanskrit-English dictionaries. This work is now offered by its editors with 'deep satisfaction to ... Sanskritists, historians of India and scholars of comparative law and legal history'.

Perhaps they could have also taken into account the possibility and desirability of a wider and more general interest. In present popular perception Sanskrit has tended to become associated mainly with religion and philosophy. Other aspects of this great language and its literature have as such receded somewhat into the background. From there they now deserve a greater exposure. That some of them are about usage in areas of current high profile like legislation and litigation, politics and governance, strategy and diplomacy could be of particular interest in modern times. Such usage is evident from the collection here reviewed. It brings together over three thousand words, terms and their definitions, together with citations from representative textual excerpts to illustrate their use. That Sanskrit was also a language intimately involved with such worldly life is quite clear from this scholarly compendium.

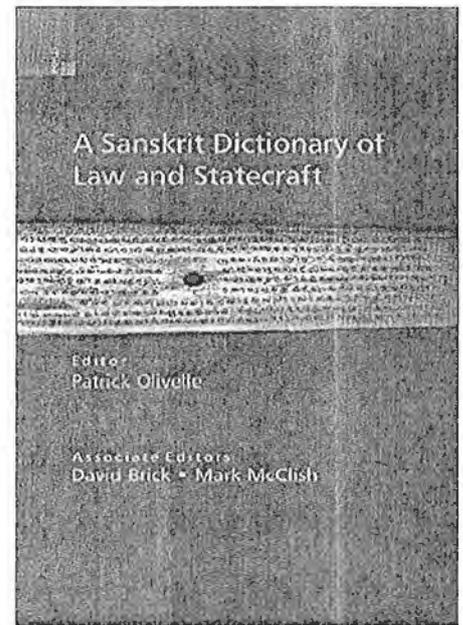
The dictionary entries are listed under fifty-one major topics detailed in the book's Introduction. These include sedition and verbal abuse, crime and punishment, plaintiff and defendant, debtor and creditor, wages and women's property, to name just a few as examples. Their sourcing ranges from ancient *mulasmriti* legal texts and commentaries, the *Arthashastra* and related dissertations, the two great epics and a host of other texts. Medieval works like the *Lekhapaddhati*, and mod-

ern ones like Joshi's *Dharmakosa* and Kane's *History of the Dharmasastra* are also taken into account. Each word is given in the Devanagari and the Roman script with textual citations to further explain meanings. These quotations are drawn from over sixty primary sources also listed in the book.

Apart from the technical texts already mentioned, the primary sources also include some well known Sanskrit works of general literature like the *Panchatantra* fables and the *Kathasaritsagara* stories, the histories *Harsacarita* and *Rajatarangini*, and the plays *Mrcchakatika* of Sudraka and *Sakuntala* of Kalidasa. This indicates that the specialized terminology here compiled was also found in popular literature. That legal and political terms in Sanskrit were not infrequently also used in works other than scholarly and mainly literary, is an aspect deserving to be better known today.

This usage seems to have been so common that particular words were often not spelt out, but mentioned only by epithets of categories. Common examples of these are seven *angas* or limbs, six *upayas* or kinds of strategies, five *apadas* or types of dangers, four *vidyas* or branches of knowledge, three *saktis* or sorts of energy and so on. This dictionary lists many though not all such epithet categories together with their components. This may be illustrated with a few examples drawn from another literary classic, the *Raghuvamsam* of Kalidasa. Though it is not included among the primary sources of this book, it is perhaps more related to its overall subject than the other creations of that great poet and dramatist.

The *Raghuvamsam* mentions the seven limbs of state, the six strategies of policy, and the five types of danger, but does not describe their contents which the writer perhaps considered at that time as well known to his readership. For the reader of today, these are given in the present dictionary. The seven limbs are the ruler, minister, ally, treasury, populace, fort and army. The six strategies are peace, war, manoeuvre, attack, division and repose. The five dangers when normal rules do not apply are fire, invasion, illness, famine and death. But the four kinds of knowledge for a ruler—logic, scriptures,



business and policy, are all combined under the last and the three energies are not described. This shows both this book's wide reach as also its limitations which are duly acknowledged in its introduction.

All in all, this is a useful and academically needed work by an eminent American Sanskritist and scholar whose erudite translations of the *Manusmriti* and the *Arthashastra* are already well known. Apart from the audience to which it is addressed, it would also be of interest for such Indian institutions as the Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA) which has undertaken a detailed study on Kautilya and related policies and the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) which has considered the utility of a glossary of Indian terms for western diplomatic nomenclatures. It would also be topical for current discussions on indigenism, a new term about the relevance of indigenous historical knowledge for the understanding of contemporary Indian politics and foreign relations.

A.N.D. Haksar is a former Ambassador of India and well known for translations from the Sanskrit. The last was of *Suleiman Charitra* in 2015 and the next is of Kalidasa's *Raghuvamsam*, due to appear in April.

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Sage, 2016, pp. 439, ₹1250.00