



Samrat Ashok

Subharti School of Buddhist Studies

A Constituent College of

SWAMI VIVEKANAND SUBHARTI UNIVERSITY

Subhartipuram, NH-58, Delhi Haridwar Meerut Bypass Road, Meerut - 250005

Website: www.subharti.org, E-mail: buddhiststudies@subharti.org, Ph: 0121-3055000



Certificate Course in Brāhmī Script

1. INTRODUCTION

Brāhmī, also called Bambhī in Prākṛta, is India's oldest deciphered script and the precursor to many Southeast Asian and Indian scripts. Its study is vital for scholars in History, Archaeology, and Indology. Brāhmī inscriptions provided dates for Emperor Asoka and Sākyamuni Buddha, helping establish a historical timeline and revealing India's cultural and philosophical diversity. These records attracted Western interest, reshaping India's global image. Several undeciphered written materials in Brāhmī and its variations are preserved in the British Museum and Indian institutions. Deciphering them requires specialised expertise, highlighting the need for more scholars in this field.

2. COURSE OBJECTIVE

This course aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Brāhmī script, its historical significance, and its role in shaping Indian and South Asian linguistic traditions. The course is designed to engage participants in text transliteration projects and assignments, actively involving them in deciphering ancient inscriptions. Additionally, the program seeks to raise awareness about various governmental and non-governmental initiatives related to manuscript decipherment, transliteration, and preservation. By incorporating practical projects and workshops, participants will gain hands-on experience with archival records, digital preservation techniques, and interdisciplinary applications of Brāhmī. The course also introduces students to the study of other South and Central Asian scripts, highlighting their interconnections and influences. Field-based projects and workshops will enable students to apply their knowledge in real-world settings, preparing them for research and professional roles in epigraphy, archaeology, and manuscript studies.



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3. KEY INFORMATION

Details	Information
Name of the Program	Certificate Course in Brāhmī Script [VACVIPMEDC2]
Minimum Qualification	Gen./OBC: High School (10 th) with a Minimum of 50% Marks SCs/ST: High School (10 th) with a Minimum of 45% Marks
Total Required Credits	12 Credits are Required from Mandatory and Elective Courses

4. COURSE SCHEDULE AND BREAKDOWN

(6 Months / 60 Hours / 26 Weeks Course Plan)

Details	Class Schedule	Allocation
Classes Per Week	3 classes per week (on alternate days)	78 classes
Effective Classes	78 classes – 4 Holidays (University) = 74 classes	74 classes
Total Hours Available	74 classes × 1 hour/class	74 hours
Hours Allocated to Syllabus	For Course Completion	60 hours
Extra Hours (Optional)	For Revision, Tests, Examinations, and Assignments, etc.	14 hours

5. WEEKLY PLAN (UNIT ALLOCATION)

Weeks	Topics	Hours Allocated
Week 01-04	Unit 1: Introduction, Origin, and Development of Scripts	12 Hours
Week 05-09	Unit 2: Reading and Writing Brāhmī	15 Hours
Week 10-14	Unit 3: Specifications, Variations, and Peculiarities	15 Hours
Week 15-20	Unit 4: Decipherment of Brāhmī Inscriptions	18 Hours



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Week 21-26	Revision, Tests, Assignments, and Examination (Optional)	14 Hours
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6. DETAILED SYLLABUS

Unit 1: Introduction, Origin, and Development of Scripts

1. General Instruction

- Overview of the course structure and objectives.
- Historical significance of script development.
- The role of writing systems in cultural transmission.

2. Language and Script

- Differentiation between language and script.
- The necessity of scripts for linguistic preservation.
- Evolution of written communication.

3. Introduction to Brāhmī

- Definition and key characteristics of the Brāhmī script.
- Earliest records of Brāhmī.
- Relationship between Brāhmī and other ancient scripts.

4. Origin of Brāhmī

- Theories regarding the origin of Brāhmī.
- Influence of Proto-Sinaitic and other scripts.
- Archaeological evidence supporting its early use.

5. Decipherment of Brāhmī

- Contributions of scholars such as James Prinsep.
- Methods used for deciphering ancient inscriptions.
- Key discoveries that led to understanding Brāhmī.

6. Nomenclature of Brāhmī

- Different names attributed to the Brāhmī script.
- Regional and historical references.



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7. Relevance and Importance of Brāhmī

- Brāhmī as a mother script of many modern scripts.
- Its importance in understanding ancient texts.
- Impact on linguistic and cultural studies.

8. Projects/Workshops Related to Indian Scripts/Manuscripts

- Transliteration of Dhammapada in Brāhmī.
- Similar projects for participants.
- Archival records and their importance in script research.

Unit 2: Reading and Writing Brāhmī

1. Inscriptional Prākṛta: The Language of Asokan Inscriptions

- Understanding Prākṛta as the medium of inscriptions.
- Relationship with other contemporary languages.
- Key linguistic features of Inscriptional Prākṛta.

2. Alphabets of Pāli, Prākṛta, and Saṁskṛta and their Brāhmī Equivalents

- Comparative study of phonetic systems.
- Structural characteristics of alphabets.
- Differences in representation of sounds.

3. Adding Vowel Signs or Diacriticals to Consonants

- Function and importance of vowel markers.
- Techniques for attaching vowel signs.
- Examples from inscriptions.

4. Conjuncts and Numerals in Brāhmī

- Formation and significance of conjunct letters.
- Numerical system in Brāhmī.
- Variations across regions.

5. Reading Practices

- Strategies for fluency in reading Brāhmī.



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- Common words and phrases in inscriptions.
- Practice with ancient texts.

6. Writing Practices

- Techniques for writing Brāhmī characters.
- Exercises for mastering script formation.
- Practical sessions with guided supervision.

7. Workshops on South and Central Asian Scripts/Manuscripts

- Sinhalese scripts/manuscripts.
- Burmese scripts/manuscripts.
- Thai scripts/manuscripts.

Unit 3: Specifications, Variations, and Peculiarities

1. Specifications of the Brāhmī Script

- Fundamental rules governing the script.
- Direction and spacing conventions.
- Stylistic elements in different periods.

2. Specifications of the Language Concerned

- Linguistic framework influencing Brāhmī.
- Syntax and grammar in inscriptions.
- Phonological peculiarities.

3. Variations in Vowels and Consonants

- Phonetic shifts over time.
- Changes in writing styles.
- Regional adaptations.

4. Variations in Medials

- Different forms of medial consonants.
- Contextual changes in pronunciation.
- Examples from inscriptions.



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5. Variations in Conjuncts and Numerals

- Differences in script usage.
- Evolution of numeral representation.
- Inscriptional evidence.

6. Regional Peculiarities of Brāhmī Script

- Differences in Northern and Southern Brāhmī.
- Evolution into later scripts like Gupta, Siddham, and Devanāgarī.
- Case studies of regional inscriptions.

7. Workshop on Re-documentation/Digitisation of Known/Deciphered Edicts/Inscriptions

- Videography.
- Photography.
- Transcription.

Unit 4: Decipherment of Brāhmī Inscriptions

1. Important Steps to Decipher an Inscription

- Methods of paleographic analysis.
- Techniques for interpreting ancient scripts.
- Challenges in deciphering inscriptions.

2. Deciphering Asokan (Earlier) Inscriptions

- Key features of Asokan inscriptions.
- Use of Prākṛta and variations.
- Examples from major rock and pillar edicts.

3. Deciphering Some Other (Later) Inscriptions

- Transition from early to later inscriptions.
- Notable post-Asokan inscriptions.
- Comparative study with Asokan texts.

4. Teachings of the Buddha in Asokan Inscriptions



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- Major Buddhist messages in Asokan edicts.
- Ethical and moral values promoted.
- Influence on later Buddhist literature.

5. On-site/Field Projects for Unknown/Undeciphered Edicts/Inscriptions

- Videography.
- Photography.
- Transcription.

7. PATTERN/SCHEME OF EXAMINATION

Paper	Paper Code	Course Title	Theory (Marks)	Practical (Marks)	Total Marks	Credits
1	VACVIPMEDC2 101	Introduction, Origin, and Development of Scripts	30 (E) + 10 (I)	10	50	3
2	VACVIPMEDC2 102	Reading and Writing Brāhmī	30 (E) + 10 (I)	10	50	3
3	VACVIPMEDC2 103	Specifications, Variations, and Peculiarities	30 (E) + 10 (I)	10	50	3
4	VACVIPMEDC2 104	Decipherment of Brāhmī Inscriptions	30 (E) + 10 (I)	10	50	3
TOTAL			120 (E) + 40 (I)	40	200	12

[E = External, I = Internal]

8. SUGGESTED READINGS



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5. Ojha, GH. (1993). *Bhāratīya Prācīna Lipimālā*. Munshiram Manoharlal
6. Pandey, R. B. (1957). *Indian palaeography*. Motilal Banarsidass.
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