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dictionary

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English
Language



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San·skrit  (săn skrit')

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n.

An ancient Indic language that is the language of Hinduism and the Vedas and is the classical literary language of India.

[Sanskrit *saṃskṛtam*, from neuter of *saṃskṛta-*, perfected, refined : *sa-*, together; see *sem-*¹ [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#) + *karoti*, he makes; see *k^wer-* [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

San skrit'ist *n.*

Word History: Like Latin in Europe and elsewhere, Sanskrit has been used by the educated classes in India for literary and religious purposes for over two thousand years. It achieved this status partly through a standardization that resulted from a long tradition of grammatical theory and analysis. This tradition reached its height around 500 BC in the work of the grammarian Panini, who composed an intricate and complex description of the language in the form of quasi-mathematical rules reminiscent of the rules of generative grammar in modern times. The language thus codified was called *saṃskṛtam*, "perfected, refined" to distinguish it from *prākṛtam* the "natural, vulgar" speech of ordinary people. Sanskrit thus became a fixed literary language, while Prakrit continued to develop into what are now the modern spoken languages of northern and central India, such as Hindi and Bengali.

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

[Indo-European Roots](#)

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The Indo-European appendix covers nearly half of the Indo-European roots that have left their mark on English words. A more complete treatment of Indo-European roots and the English words derived from them is available in our [Dictionary of Indo-European Roots](#).

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