

FROM  
**A PRACTICAL GRAMMAR OF THE  
PĀLI LANGUAGE**

BY  
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(2ND EDITION, MANDALAY, 1915)

*(Editor's note: the following is based of the Medieval Pāli prosody Vuttodaya, and should not be taken as a guide to Canonical prosody. There are a number of mistakes in it, as the author doesn't seem to have understood his source completely, these have been corrected in the text with the original cited in the notes.*

*Despite various shortcomings the work presents a succinct account of Pāli prosody during the Medieval period. I have used the metrical markings that are standard on this website though Duroiselle occasionally used other marks to distinguish syllabic weight (or length as stated here). All footnotes in this article are by the present writer)*

**CHAPTER 15:  
PROSODY**

626. Prosody is that part of Grammar which treats of the laws of versification.

A **gāthā** in Pāli poetry, is a stanza.

A **pāda** is the fourth part of a stanza, called also a quarter verse.

A **vaṇṇa** is a syllable in a pāda.

A short syllable is termed **lahu**.

A long syllable is called **garu**.

A foot is termed **gaṇa**.

627. The mark **∪** represents a short syllable, and the mark **—** a long syllable. A foot containing two long syllables is termed **gā**, that is, **ga + ga**, the initial syllable **ga** of the word **garu** being used to represent a long syllable. A foot of two short syllables is termed **lā**, that is **la + la**, the initial syllable of the word **lahu** being employed to represent a short syllable.

628. The following are the four varieties of a dis-syllabic foot.

Syllables	Pāli	English
∪∪	la la or lā	Pyrrhic
— —	ga ga or gā	Spondee
∪ —	la ga	Iambus
— ∪	ga la	Trochee

629. The eight-syllable feet, known in Pāli as the **aṭṭhagaṇa** are as follows:

<b>Syllables</b>	<b>Pāli</b>	<b>English</b>
---	ma	Molossus
uuu	na	Tribach
-uu	bha	Dactyl
u--	ya	Bacchic
u-u	ja	Amphibrach
uu-	sa	Anapæst
-u-	ra	Cretic
--u	ta	Antibacchic

### SHORT AND LONG SYLLABLES.

630. The short vowels in Pāli are **a, i, u**, the long vowels are **ā, ī, ū, e, o**. When **a, i** or **u** is followed by a double consonant, it is prosodically long. For instance, the first as well as the second **a** in **cakkañca**, is long because followed by **kk** and **ñc** respectively. Before niggahita (**ṃ**) a short vowel is also always prosodically long. Thus in **saccaṃ**, the **a** before **ṃ** is long. In poetry, a naturally short vowel is occasionally lengthened and a naturally long one shortened to meet the exigencies of the metre. In order to make a short vowel long, the consonant following it is sometimes doubled.<sup>1</sup>

### VARIETIES OF METERS.

631. There are three classes of metres, termed **Sama**, **Addhasama**, and **Visama**.<sup>2</sup> When the syllables in all the pādas are exactly alike the metre is called **Sama**; when those in the first and third and those in the second and fourth pādas are alike it is **Addhasama**; and when all the pādas or verses are different, the metre is termed **Visama**.

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<sup>1</sup> Conjuncts are also sometimes simplified to comply with the needs of the metre.

<sup>2</sup> Strictly speaking these are three classes of **Akkharacchandas** (syllabic) metres. Besides these there are also **Mattāchandas** and **Gaṇacchandas** metres, which are treated together later under the rubric **Jāti** (639).

## 1. THE SAMA CLASS.

632. In gāthas of this class, the syllables in each pāda may range from six up to twenty-two. The names of the seventeen kinds of metres<sup>3</sup> are as follows:

<b>Gāyatti</b>	6 syllables
<b>Uṇhi</b>	7 syllables
<b>Anuṭṭhubhaṃ</b>	8 syllables
<b>Brahati</b>	9 syllables
<b>Panti</b>	10 syllables
<b>Tuṭṭhubhaṃ</b>	11 syllables
<b>Jagatī</b>	12 syllables
<b>Atijagatī</b>	13 syllables
<b>Sakkarī</b>	14 syllables
<b>Atisakkarī</b>	15 syllables
<b>Aṭṭhi</b>	16 syllables
<b>Atyaṭṭhi</b>	17 syllables
<b>Dhuti</b>	18 syllables
<b>Atidhuti</b>	19 syllables
<b>Kati</b>	20 syllables
<b>Pakati</b>	21 syllables
<b>Akati</b>	22 syllables

633. These are again subdivided according to the kind of feet employed in each stanza; as the four pādas are similar, the scheme of only one pāda is given for each kind of metre:

1. **Gāyatti**, having pādas of six syllables. There is one variety:<sup>4</sup>

Tanumajjhā, -- ◡ | ◡ --

2. **Uṇhi** having pādas of seven syllables. There is one variety:

Kumāralalitā, ◡ -- ◡ | ◡ ◡ -- | --

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<sup>3</sup> That is, the 17 kinds listed by Vuttodaya. Normally 26 kinds of metres are listed in the prosodies, from 1 syllable up to 26; and then there are the Daṇḍaka class of metres, from 27 syllables upwards.

<sup>4</sup> Again these statements about the number of metres in each class only refer to what is found in Vuttodaya; in Vṛttanaratnākara, for instance, there are three metres in the Gāyatrī section, and in my edition of that text ten more are found among the variant readings.

3. **Anuṭṭhubhaṃ** having pādas of eight syllables. There are five varieties.

- (i) Citrapadā, —○○|—○○|—
- (ii) Vijjummālā, ———|———|—
- (iii) Māṇavakaṃ, —○○|—○○|—
- (iv) Sāmaṇikā, —○—|○—○|—○
- (v) Pāmaṇikā, ○—○|—○—|—○—

4. **Brahati** having pādas of nine syllables. There are two varieties.

- (i) Halamukhī, —○—|○○○|○○—
- (ii) Bhujagasusubhatā,<sup>5</sup> ○○○|○○○|———

5. **Panti** having pādas of ten syllables. There are seven varieties.

- (i) Suddhavirājitam, ———|○○—|○—○|—
- (ii) Paṇavo, ———|○○○|○—○|—
- (iii) Rummavati, —○○|———|○○—|—
- (iv) Mattā, ———|—○○|○○—|—
- (v) Campakamālā,<sup>6</sup> —○○|———|○○—|—
- (vi) Manoramā, ○○○|—○—|○—○|—
- (vii) Ubbhāsakaṃ,<sup>7</sup> —○—|———|—○—|○

6. **Tuṭṭhubhaṃ** having pādas of eleven syllables. There are eleven varieties.

- (i) Upaṭṭhitā,<sup>8</sup> —○—|○—○|○—○|—
- (ii) Indavajirā, —○—|—○—|○—○|—
- (iii) Upindavajirā,<sup>9</sup> ○—○|—○—|○—○|—

*Remark. When the quarter-verses of Indavajirā and Upavajirā are mixed together in a stanza in any order, the stanza is then called Upajāti.*

- (iv) Sumukhī,<sup>10</sup> ○○○|—○—|○—○|—
- (v) Dodhakaṃ, —○○|—○○|—○○|—
- (vi) Sālinī, ———|—○—|—○—|—
- (vii) Vātummī,<sup>11</sup> ———|—○○|—○—|—

*Remark. There are pauses after the fourth and seventh (last) syllables.*

<sup>5</sup> Text: Bhujagasusu.

<sup>6</sup> This description agrees with (iv) Rummavati above, as it does in Vuttodaya. According to the Sanskrit prosodies however, Campakamālā is distinguished from that metre by having a caesura after the 5th syllable.

<sup>7</sup> Text describes the last syllable as being long (—), but Vuttodaya states to marā lca, (this metre has) tagaṇa, magaṇa, ragaṇa, and a short (light) syllable.

<sup>8</sup> This is sometimes listed amongst the Panti class of metres, having the scheme —○—|○—○|○—○|—.

<sup>9</sup> Text: Upavajirā (cf. Sanskrit Upendravajirā).

<sup>10</sup> Text: Sumukkī.

<sup>11</sup> Text: Vātummissā.

- (viii) **Sirī**,<sup>12</sup> —○○|—○○|○○○|—  
 (ix) **Rathoddhatā**, —○○|○○○|—○○|○—  
 (x) **Svāgatā**, —○○|○○○|—○○|—  
 (xi) **Bhaddikā**, ○○○|○○○|—○○|○—

7. **Jagatī**<sup>13</sup> having pādas of twelve syllables. There are fourteen varieties.

- (i) **Vaṃsaṭṭhā**, ○—○○|—○○|○○○|—○○—  
 (ii) **Indavaṃsā**, —○○|—○○|○○○|—○○—  
 (iii) **Toṭaka**, ○○○|○○○|○○○|○○—  
 (iv) **Dutavilāmbita**, ○○○|—○○|—○○|—○○—  
 (v) **Puṭa**, ○○○|○○○|—○○|○—

*Remark. There are pauses after the fourth and twelfth (last) syllables.*

- (vi) **Kusumavicittā**, ○○○|○○—|○○○|○○—  
 (vii) **Bhujaṅgappayāta**, ○—○○|○○—|○○—|○○—  
 (viii) **Piyaṃvadā**, ○○○|—○○|○○○|—○○—  
 (ix) **Lalitā**, —○○|—○○|○○○|—○○—  
 (x) **Pamitakkarā**, ○○○|○○○|○○○|○○—  
 (xi) **Ujjalā**, ○○○|○○○|—○○|—○○—  
 (xii) **Vessadevī**, —○○|—○○|○○○|○○—

*Remark. There are pauses after the fifth and twelfth (last) syllables.*

- (xiii) **Tāmarasaṃ**, ○○○|○○○|○○○|○○—  
 (xiv) **Kamalā**, ○○○|○○—|○○○|○○—

8. **Atijagatī** having pādas of thirteen syllables. There are two varieties.

- (i) **Pahāsinī**, —○○|○○○|○○○|—○○|—

*Remark. There are pauses after the third and thirteenth (last) syllables.*

- (ii) **Rucirā**, ○—○○|—○○|○○○|○○○|—

*Remark. There are pauses after the fourth and thirteenth (last) syllables.*

9. **Sakkarī** having pādas of fourteen syllables. There are three varieties.

- (i) **Aparājitā**, ○○○|○○○|—○○|○○○|○○—

*Remark. There are pauses after the seventh and fourteenth (last) syllables.*

- (ii) **Paharaṇakalikā**, ○○○|○○○|—○○|○○○|○○—

*Remark. There are pauses after the seventh and fourteenth (last) syllables.*

- (iii) **Vasantatilakā**, —○○|—○○|○○○|○○○|—

<sup>12</sup> Text: **Surasirī**.

<sup>13</sup> Spelt **Jagati** in the text against its earlier spelling **Jagatī**. Same with **Atijagatī** below.

10. **Atisakkarī** fifteen syllables. There are four varieties.

(i) **Sasikalā**, ◡◡◡|◡◡◡|◡◡◡|◡◡◡|◡◡-

(ii) **Maṇigunānikaro**, ◡◡◡|◡◡◡|◡◡◡|◡◡◡|◡◡-

*Remark. There are pauses after the eighth and fifteenth (last) syllables.*

(iii) **Mālinī**, ◡◡◡|◡◡◡|---|◡---|◡---

*Remark. There is a pause after the eighth syllable.*

(iv) **Pabhaddakaṃ**, ◡◡◡|◡-◡|---◡|◡-◡|◡-

11. **Aṭṭhi** having pādas of sixteen syllables. There is one variety.

(i) **Vāninī**, ◡◡◡|◡-◡|---◡|◡-◡|◡-|

12. **Atyaṭṭhi** having pādas of seventeen syllables. There are three varieties.

(i) **Sikhariṇī**, ◡---|---|◡◡◡|◡◡-|---◡|◡-

*Remark. There are pauses after the sixth and seventeenth (last) syllables.*

(ii) **Hariṇī**, ◡◡◡|◡◡-|---|◡-|◡◡-|◡-

(iii) **Mandakkantā**, ---|---◡|◡◡◡|---◡|---◡|---

*Remark. There are pauses after the fourth, tenth and seventeenth (last) syllables.*

13. **Dhuti** having pādas of eighteen syllables. There is one variety.

(i) **Kusumitalatāvellitā**, ---|---◡|◡◡◡|◡---|◡---|◡---

14. **Atidhuti** having pādas of nineteen syllables. There are two varieties.

(i) **Meghavipphujjitā**,<sup>14</sup> ◡---|---|◡◡◡|◡◡-|---◡|---◡|-

*Remark. There are pauses after the sixth and thirteenth, and (last) nineteenth syllables*

(ii) **Saddūlavikkīlitī**, ---|◡◡-|◡-◡|◡◡-|---◡|---◡|-

*Remark. There are pauses after the twelfth and nineteenth (last) syllables.*

15. **Kati** having pādas of twenty syllables. There is one variety.

(i) **Vutta**, -◡-|◡-◡|---◡|◡-◡|---◡|◡-◡|-

16. **Pakati** having pādas of twenty-one syllables. There is one variety.

(i) **Saddharā**, ---|---◡|---◡|◡◡◡|◡---|◡---|◡---

17. **Akati** having pādas of twenty-two syllables. There is one variety.

(i) **Bhaddaka**, -◡◡|---◡|◡◡◡|---◡|◡◡◡|---◡|◡◡◡|-

<sup>14</sup> Accidentally described as having 22 syllables in the text, through repetition of tagaṇa towards the end of the line.

## 2. THE ADDHASAMA CLASS

634. In the addhasama class of metres, the first and the third, and the second and fourth pādas are similar. The following table shows eleven kinds of metres that come under this head:

Name of Metre	Odd quarter-verses 1st-3rd	Even quarter-verses 2nd-4th
Upacitta	∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-	-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-
Dutamajjhā	-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-	∪∪∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-
Vegavatī	∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-	-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-
Bhaddavirājaṃ	-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-	-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-
Ketumatī	∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-	-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-
Akhyānikā	-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-	∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-
Viparitākhyānikā <sup>15</sup>	∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-	-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-
Hariṇaplutā	∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-	∪∪∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-
Aparavutta <sup>16</sup>	∪∪∪∪∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-	∪∪∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-
Pupphitagga	∪∪∪∪∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-	∪∪∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-
Yavāmatī <sup>17</sup>	-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-	∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-∪∪-

## 3. THE VISAMA CLASS

635. The pādas in this division of verses are all dissimilar. Under this head comes the metre known as Vatta, the heroic measure of Pali literature, eight syllables being employed in each pāda, the first and last syllables therein being free, and this, a short or long syllable may be optionally used in those syllables. The syllables between the first and last, form two seats, having three syllables in each seat or foot. In the first seat in all the quarters, any foot may be employed except a Tribach and an Anapaest, that is to say, three short syllables (∪∪∪) or two short and one long (∪∪-) must not be used. In the second seat of the first and third quarters, any foot may be used, but in the second seat of the second and fourth quarters only *ya* (Bacchic) or *ja* (Amphibrach) (i.e., ∪-- or ∪-∪) must be employed. It should be noted, however, that the Vatta proper has *ja* in the second seat of both the second and the fourth pādas.

*Remark. The sign ≍ means that the syllable may be optionally be short or long.*

<sup>15</sup> Text: Viparitapubba.

<sup>16</sup> Text has: Remark. The *Aparavutta* corresponds to the *Vetāliya* explained, referred to lower down (sic); but this is incorrect, *Aparavatta* is only one specific kind of *Vetāliya*, many other are possible.

<sup>17</sup> Text: Yavādikāmatī.

636. (i) **Vatta** Proper.

	Free	1st seat	2nd seat	Free
1st pāda	⌞	⌞⌞⌞	⌞⌞⌞	⌞
2nd pāda	⌞	⌞⌞⌞	⌞---	⌞
3rd pāda	⌞	⌞⌞⌞	⌞⌞⌞	⌞
4th pāda	⌞	⌞⌞⌞	⌞--- <sup>18</sup>	⌞

637. Sometimes the Gāthā contains six pādas - the fifth following the rule for the first and third; the sixth that for the second and fourth.

638. Besides the **Vatta** Proper above shown, there are six<sup>19</sup> kinds of **Vatta** metres:

(ii) **Viparītapathyāvatta**.

Pādas 1 & 3: ⌞|⌞⌞⌞|⌞-⌞|⌞<sup>20</sup>

Pādas 2 & 4: ⌞|⌞⌞⌞|⌞---|⌞

(iii) **Capalāvatta**.

Pādas 1 & 3: ⌞|⌞⌞⌞|⌞⌞⌞|⌞

Pādas 2 & 4: ⌞|⌞⌞⌞|⌞---|⌞

(iv) **Na-Vipulā**.

Pādas 1 & 3: ⌞|⌞⌞⌞|⌞⌞⌞|⌞

Pādas 2 & 4: ⌞|⌞⌞⌞|⌞-⌞|⌞<sup>21</sup>

or

All pādas: ⌞|⌞⌞⌞|⌞⌞⌞|⌞

<sup>18</sup> Text describes the 2nd seat in the second and fourth pādas as being ⌞-⌞; but Vuttodaya states: yo 'ṇṇavā, yagaṇa (⌞---) after four (syllables).

<sup>19</sup> Text: eight, owing to a mistake in interpretation regarding numbers (v) & (vi).

<sup>20</sup> Text describes the second seat as ⌞-⌞; but Vuttodaya: ojesu jena, jagaṇa (⌞-⌞) after four (syllables).

<sup>21</sup> Text describes the second seat as ⌞---, which would make it the same as Capalāvatta above; Vuttodaya makes it clear that the na-, bha-, ra-, and ta-vipulās have two forms according to whether we follow Setava or Piṅgala, Setava has the same scheme for these variations in all four lines; Piṅgala has it in the first and third pādas only (the second and fourth being ⌞|⌞⌞⌞|⌞-⌞|⌞).

(v) Vipulā of Setava.

(vi) Vipulā of Piṅgala.<sup>22</sup>

(vii) Bha-Vipulā.

Pādas 1 & 3: ॐ|ॐॐॐ|—ॐॐ|ॐ

Pādas 2 & 4: ॐ|ॐॐॐ|ॐ—ॐ|ॐ

or

All pādas: ॐ|ॐॐॐ|—ॐॐ|ॐ

(viii) Ra-Vipulā.

Pādas 1 & 3: ॐ|ॐॐॐ|—ॐ—|ॐ

Pādas 2 & 4: ॐ|ॐॐॐ|ॐ—ॐ|ॐ

or

All pādas: ॐ|ॐॐॐ|—ॐ—|ॐ

(ix) Ta-Vipulā.

Pādas 1 & 3: ॐ|ॐॐॐ|——ॐ|ॐ

Pādas 2 & 4: ॐ|ॐॐॐ|ॐ—ॐ|ॐ<sup>23</sup>

or

All pādas: ॐ|ॐॐॐ|——ॐ|ॐ

## JĀTI STANZAS

640. Besides the metres noted above, there are some that are regulated by time (*kāla*). Such metres are termed *Jāti*. They are of three kinds:-

(a) *Ariyā*.

(b) *Vetāliya*.

and (c) *Mattāsamaka*.<sup>24</sup>

641. In the first of these, the *Ariyā*, the first two pādas of half a *gāthā* contain seven and a half feet; in the even, that is, in the second, fourth, and sixth feet, any of the following, namely, *bha*, *ja*, *sa*, *gā*, or four short syllables may be employed, but *ja* must not be used in the odd feet, that is, in the first, third, and fifth. The sixth foot may be

<sup>22</sup> Both of these descriptions are omitted as they are mistaken in the original, where it states, quite erroneously that in the Vipulā of Setavā pādas 1 & 3 should be ॐ|ॐॐॐ|ॐ—ॐ|ॐ; and pādas 2 & 4 ॐ|ॐॐॐ|ॐ—ॐ|ॐ. The Vipulā of Piṅgala is described as having pādas 1 & 3 ॐ|ॐॐॐ|ॐ——|ॐ; 2 & 4 as being ॐ|ॐॐॐ|ॐ—ॐ|ॐ; with the remark that “this metre (vi) is also called Pathyāvatta”.

<sup>23</sup> Text describes this seat as ॐ—ॐ; but Vuttodaya: *To ’ṇṇavā, tagaṇa* (——ॐ) after four (syllables).

<sup>24</sup> The text omits to describe the *Mattāsamaka* metres, which consist of different varieties of metre with four gaṇas having four mattas to the gaṇa. It appears they do not exist in any extant Pāli texts.

la or four short syllables. The second-half stanza must fulfil the same conditions. It is necessary to observe that in the **Jāti** metre a foot consists of four syllabic instants, the time taken up in pronouncing a short syllable being taken as an instant of time; thus a long syllable being taken equal to two short ones, each foot used in the **ariyā** is equal to four syllabic instants. The following is an illustration of an **Ariyā** stanza:<sup>25</sup>

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th foot
<b>First half stanza</b>	--,	UUUU,	--,	UU--,	--,	UUU,	UUU,	—
<b>Second half stanza</b>	UU--,	UUUU,	--,	--,	--,	U,	--,	—

642. The **Vetāliya** is so formed that it usually consists of fourteen syllabic instants in the odd quarters and sixteen in the even, while the **Mattāsamaka** consists of sixteen syllabic instants in each quarter. The metres of the **Jāti** class furnish many varieties, but it is not within the scope of this work to treat of them in detail. As, however, the **Vetāliya** is of rather frequent occurrence, we give below the scheme of it. Each pāda is divided into three seats; the first seat in the first and third pādas must have six syllabic instants; the first seat of the second and fourth pādas must contain eight syllabic instants; the second seat must be a cretic foot and the third a Iambic foot:

Number of syllabic instants	1st seat	2nd seat	3rd seat
		Cretic	Iambus
1st pāda	6 syllabic instants	--U--	U--
2nd pāda	8 syllabic instants	--U--	U--
3rd pāda	6 syllabic instants	--U--	U--
4th pāda	8 syllabic instants	--U--	U--

*Remarks.* (a) The above is a perfect **Vetāliya**.<sup>26</sup> (b) the sign of the long syllable (—) must be counted as 2 since it is equal to two short syllables.

FINIS

<sup>25</sup> It should be noted that this is simply an example, any other schemes are possible.

<sup>26</sup> Text here reads: *In the third seat, the following feet may be found instead of the iambus: UU pyrrhic -- spondee U-- bacchic UUU amphibrac.* However, the spondee and amphibrac are, in fact, never found in any **Vetāliya** metre, except by corruption; the 1st pyrrhic never occurs as it the last syllable is always lengthened no matter what its natural weight is. The 3rd variety listed is a separate metre known as **Opacchandāsaka**.