

APPENDIX A

SANSKRIT PROSODY

Introduction

The earliest and most important work in Sanskrit prosody is the Piṅgala-chhandas-śāstra, attributed to the sage Piṅgala, which consists of Sūtras distributed over eight books. The Agni-Purāṇa also gives a complete system of prosody founded apparently on Piṅgala's. Several other original treatises have likewise been composed by various authors, such as the Śrutabodha, Vāṇibhūṣaṇa, Vṛitta-darpaṇa, Vṛitta-ratnākara, Vṛitta-kaumudī, Chhandomañjarī &c. In the following pages the Chhandomañjarī and Vṛitta-ratnākara have been chiefly drawn upon, Vedic as well as Prākṛita metres being ignored in this Appendix.

Sanskrit composition may be in the form of गद्य 'prose' or पद्य 'verse' or poetry expressed in the form of stanzas.

A stanza or *padya* is a combination of four *padas* or quarters, which are regulated either by the number of syllables (अक्षर), or by the number of syllabic instants (मात्रा).

A पद्य is a वृत्त or जाति.

A वृत्त is a stanza the metre of which is regulated by the number and position of syllables in each Pāda or quarter. A जाति is a stanza the metre of which is regulated by the number of syllabic instants in each quarter.

Vṛittas are divided into three classes:—समवृत्त in which the Pādas or quarters composing the stanza are all similar; अर्धसमवृत्त in which the alternate quarters are similar; and विषमवृत्त in which the quarters are all dissimilar.

A syllable is as much of a word as can be pronounced at once, that is, a vowel with or without one or more consonants.

A syllable is लघु 'short' or गुरु 'long', according as its vowel is 'short' or 'long'. The vowels अ, इ, उ, ऋ, and ए are short; and आ, ई, ऊ, ऋ, ए, ऐ, औ, and ओ are long. But a short vowel becomes long in prosody when it is followed by an *Anusvara* or *Visarga*, or by a conjunct consonant; as the vowel अ in गन्ध

or गः. (The consonants प्र & ह, as also ञ, & क, are said to be exceptions, before which the vowel may be short by a sort of poetical licence; e. g. in Ku. 7. 11 or Śi. 10. 60, where, however, emendations have been proposed by critics to render the metre conformable to the general laws of prosody.) So also the last syllable of a *pāda* is either long or short, according to the exigence of the metre, whatever be its natural length.

सातुस्वारश्च दीर्घश्च विसर्गो च गुरुर्भवेत् ।
वर्णः संयोगपूर्वश्च तथा पादान्तगोऽपि वा ॥

In metres regulated by the number of syllabic instants, one instant or *Mātrā* is allotted to a short vowel, and two to a long one.

For the purpose of scanning metres regulated by the number of syllables, writers on prosody have devised eight 'Gāṇas' or syllabic feet, each consisting of three syllables, and distinguished from one another by particular syllables being short or long. They are given in the following verse:—

मञ्जिगुरुञ्जिलघुश्च तकारो
भादिगुरुः पुनरादिलघुर्धुः ।
जो गुरुमध्यगतो रलमध्यः
सोऽन्तगुरुः कथितोऽन्तलघुस्तः ॥
आदिमध्यावसानेषु यरता यान्ति लघवम् ।
भजसा गौरवं यान्ति मनौ तु गुरुलघवम् ॥

Expressed in symbols (the symbol \smile denoting a short syllable, and — a long one), the different Gāṇas may be represented as follows:—

य $\smile\text{—}\text{—}$ (Bacchius)
र $\text{—}\smile\text{—}$ (Amphimacer)
त $\text{—}\text{—}\smile$ (Anti-bacchius)
भ $\text{—}\smile\smile$ (Dactylus)
ज $\smile\text{—}\smile$ (Amphibrachys)
स $\smile\smile\text{—}$ (Anapæstus)
म $\text{—}\text{—}\text{—}$ (Molossus)
न $\smile\smile\smile$ (Tribrachys)

Similarly ल (\smile) is used to denote a short syllable, and ग (—) a long one.