

Chanting Sanskrit verses in Gaudiya Vaishnavism

– Jagadananda Das –

Mangalacharan

om

ajJAna-timirAndhasya jJAnAJjanA-zalAkayA
cakSur unmlitaM yena tasmai zri-gurave namaH

nAma-zreSThaM manum api zaci-putram atra svarUpaM
rUpaM tasyAgrajam uru-purim mAthurIM goSTha-vATIm
rAdhA-kuNDaM giri-varam aho rAdhika-mAdhavAzAM
prApto yasya prathita-kRpayA zri-guruM taM nato 'smi

I bow my head again and again to the holy preceptor, through whose most celebrated mercy I have received the best of all names, the initiation mantra, Sri Sachinandan Mahaprabhu, Svarupa, Rupa and his older brother Sanatan, the extensive dominions of Mathurapuri, a dwelling place in the pasturing grounds [of Krishna], Radha Kund, the chief of all mountains, Sri Govardhan, and most pointedly of all, the hope of attaining the lotus feet of Sri Radha Madhava.

Introduction

One of the things that attracts many people to Indian religion and to Vaishnavism in particular is the beauty of the Sanskrit language. One of the most attractive features of Sanskrit is its verse. The complex Sanskrit metres have a majestic sonority that is unmatched in any other language. A Sanskrit verse properly chanted seems to carry an authority that confirms and supports its meaning. In this little article I am going to discuss some features of Sanskrit prosody so that students and devotees can learn how to pronounce and chant Sanskrit verses in the proper manner.

We will start by reviewing Sanskrit pronunciation. Then we will discuss some of the rules of prosody. The word “prosody” means the study of metrical composition, that is to say, the rules for creating verse. Sanskrit verses are written according to strict rules and we will learn some of these rules in this class. Next we will go over the rules for a number of different types of the most popular metre. I will give examples and also tell you where you can find other examples of the same metre in the shastras such as the Bhagavad Gita, Srimad Bhagavatam and the writings of the Six Goswamis.

For help with Sanskrit pronunciation see *Sanskrit pronunciation guide*.

Sanskrit verse is written on the basis of long and short syllables. In Sanskrit these are called guru (heavy) and laghu (light). English metres are based on accented

syllables, but classical Sanskrit does not have accents like English. Nevertheless, the idea of heavier and lighter syllables can be seen as something similar to accented and unaccented syllables.

Generally, each verse should contain four lines of a predetermined number of syllables, in which the long and short syllables have a fixed order. So, for example, in order to write a Sanskrit verse in the metre known as *mAlinI*, we must start with six short syllables followed by two longs, then another long, followed by short-long-long, short-long-long. So our first job is to learn to distinguish between long and short syllables, otherwise we won't ever be able to properly pronounce or chant a Sanskrit verse.

Now, how can we distinguish between long and short syllables? In Sanskrit there are only five short vowels: a, i, u, R and L. So in the word *Rsi*, we have two short syllables. All the other vowels, A, I, U, RR, e, ai, o, au, are considered to be long. Thus, the word *rAdhA* contains two long syllables, *rA-dhA*. Therefore, if we wish to correctly pronounce Sanskrit verse, we must be very careful to clearly make a difference between short vowel sounds and long ones. This is especially important for Westerners who are reading transliterated texts to remember.

If a vowel has no macron or line over it, then it is a short vowel and should be pronounced in that way. Exaggerate the shortness and length of the vowels. The distinction must be made clear. Now, this is especially true of the first Sanskrit vowel, *a*. Westerners who see this letter have a tendency to pronounce it *A*. The correct pronunciation is like the "u" as in "sun." So in the following verse by Raghunath Das Goswami from *VilApa-kusumAJjali* (14), written in the previously mentioned *mAlinI* metre,

*yad-avadhi mama kAcin maJjarI rUpa-pUrvA
vraja-bhuvi bata netra-dvandva-dIptiM cakAra
tad-avadhi tava vRndAraNya-rAjji prakAmAM
caraNa-kamala-lAkSA-sandidRkSA mamAbhUt*

O Queen of Vrindavan! Ever since a certain manjari named Rupa anointed my eyes with light here in the land of Braj, a deep desire has arisen within me to see the crimson of your lotus feet.

Here each line begins with six short syllables, *ya-da-va-dhi ma-ma; vra-ja-bhu-vi-ba-ta*, and so on. The whole charm of this verse depends on the correct pronunciation of these six short syllables. If I butcher the pronunciation by pronouncing them all long, *yA-dA-vA-dhi mA-mA*, or even worse mixing long and short sounds where only the one or the other is called for, the effect is lost.

Now that this is clear, we have something else to learn about long and short syllables. If the vowel is long, it is clear that the syllable is long. However, if a short vowel is followed by a conjunct consonant, it is also considered to be a long syllable for the purposes of prosody. Thus in the word *kR-Sna*, though the syllable *kR* on its own would normally be considered short, because it is followed by the conjunct consonant *Sna*, that is to say, the consonants *S* and *Na* joined together, the previous

short syllable *kR* is considered to be long. In the verse just cited from *VilApa-kusumAJjal*:

*yad avadhi mama kAcin majJarI rUpa-pUrvA
vraja-bhuvi bata netra-dvandva-dIptiM cakAra*

there are a number of examples of this: *kAcin*, *netra-dvandva*. Short vowels followed by a visarga (the h with a dot under it) and *anusvAra* (the m with a dot over it, or sometimes under it) are also considered long. Remember that the ten aspirated consonants, *kha*, *gha*, *cha*, *jha*, *Tha*, *Dha*, *tha*, *dha*, *pha*, *bha* are **not** conjunct consonants, but are simple.

So that is the first important thing to learn: distinguish between your long and short consonants. Exaggerate the length of your long vowels, though you do not have to exaggerate the length of the vowel sound preceding a conjunct consonant. The existence of the extra consonant sound will automatically lengthen the syllable without your having to make any extra effort.

Caesura

Now, the next important thing to learn about in Sanskrit verse is the caesura. Caesura or hiatus, known as *yati* in Sanskrit, is the natural pause which occurs **inside** a line of poetry. Thus, in a line of eight syllables, you might have a caesura or pause after four syllables. In such short verses there is some irregularity and it is not so important. In general, the longer the metre, the more fixed and regular the caesura.

In longer verses such as *zardUla-vikrIDita*, which has nineteen syllables to the line, the caesura is especially important. If you stop after five, or ten syllables rather than at the officially prescribed pause after twelve syllables, your recitation will sound choppy and confused. As an example, we will refer once more to the verse from *VilApa-kusumAJjali*:

*yad avadhi mama kAcin /
majJarI rUpa-pUrvA*

Here we have fifteen syllables with a caesura after eight. Another example: Take a look at the verse by Raghunath Das from *MuktA-carita* that was given in the *mangalacharana*:

*nAma zreSThaM /
manum api zacI /
putram atra svarUpam*

This verse is written in the *mandAkrAntA* metre, which means that it has seventeen syllables to the line, with two caesurae: the first after four syllables, the second after another six. Note that the word *zacI-putram*, "son of Sachi", is a compound word, but that the caesura comes in the middle of it. It is rare that a single word like *zacI* or *suta* on its own will be split by the caesura (*za-cl*, *su-ta*), that is considered pretty bad form. On the other hand, you can split a compound word like *zacI-suta*, so watch for that kind of thing.

The second line of the verse also has a permissible irregularity which should be watched for:

rUpaM tasyAgrajam uru-puriM mAthurIM goSTha-vATIm

The words *rUpaM tasya agrajam* have been combined in sandhi and the first letter of *agrajam* has been joined with the last *a* of *tasya*. This is quite permissible, though some poets think that it is not the best style. Some people would consider this to be decadent versification. The Goswamis do it fairly often. However, if you know your caesura you won't be thrown off by it.

In the older metres, *anuSTubh*, *triSTubh* and *jagati*, to which we will be directing our attention shortly, there is some tendency for the caesura to be irregular, even within the same verse. In some other metres also, there may be differences in the way certain authors treat the caesura, though they will usually be more consistent than in the first few types of metre with which we will be dealing. In general, it may be said, that there will be a natural pause following a certain number of syllables in each line of the verse. It will usually come at the end of a word and except for a few metres which you are not likely to encounter in standard works, nearly always on a long syllable.

1. *anuSTubh*

Now we can start with some examples of major types of metre. We will begin with the older metres which are the most common in the Puranas and the Mahabharata. Remember that the caesuras in these metres might be irregular. In fact, because these are shorter metres, it might be said that the caesura is less important. So don't get upset if there appears to be little regularity with *anuSTubh*, *triSTubh* and *jagati*.

The first metre we will look at is called *anuSTubh*. It is also known as *zloka*. Now you may have heard the word *zloka* being used in connection with any Sanskrit verse; that is not entirely incorrect, but the original meaning is a type of verse which has four lines of eight syllables each.

We find *anuSTubh* verses everywhere. It is one of the most liberal types of metre in its formation and therefore one of the easiest to write. The writer of the *anuSTubh* verse is not obliged to determine the length of every syllable. The first four syllables of each line are totally irregular. The next four syllables have to be either short-long-long-(optional/long) in the first and third lines and short-long-short-(optional/long) in the second and fourth lines. The caesura in the verse is not very important. In this, as well as in *triSTubh* and *jagati*, which we will come to presently, the last syllable in a line is often short; even so, it is always counted as a long. So,

*dharmakSetre kurukSetre
samavetA yuyutsavaH
mAmakAH pANDavAz caiva
kim akurvata saJjaya*

long, long, long, long, caesura, short, long, long, long

short, short, long, long, caesura, short, long, short, long.
long, short, long; caesura (after 3 this time); long, short, long, long, short;
short, short, long, short, short. long, short, short.

This is the most familiar of all metres and the easiest to chant. You make the least mistakes chanting precisely because the length of the syllables is not relevant for a great part of each line and the caesura is not important.

So we will chant some verses from canto 1, chapter 2, Srimad-Bhagavatam:

nArAyaNaM namaskRtya naraM caiva narottamam
devIM sarasvatIM vyAsaM tato jayam udIrayet
munayaH sADhu pRSTho 'haM bhavadbhir loka-maGgalam
yat kRtaH kRSNa-samprazno yenAtmA suprasIdati
sa vai puMsAM paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhokSaje
ahaituky apratihata yayAtmA samprasIdati
vAsudeve bhagavati bhakti-yogaH prayojitaH
janayaty Azu vairAgyaM jJAnaM ca yad ahaitukam
dharmaH svanuSThitaH puMsAM viSvaksena-kathAsu yaH
notpAdayed yadi ratiM zrama eva hi kevalam

(2) *triSTubh*

The next kind of verse is called *triSTubh*. *triSTubh* verses contain eleven syllables to the line. Though not as common as the *anuSTubh*, they are sprinkled throughout the Bhagavad Gita, Mahabharata and of course in the Bhagavata Purana. This metre is found in a primitive and somewhat irregular úform in the Ág-Veda, the Upanishads, the Brahmanas, etc.

(i) *indravajrA* and *upendravajrA*

There are different kinds of *triSTubh*. The most common of these are *indravajrA* and *upendravajrA*. The only difference between these two is that the first syllable is long in the one and short in the other, so the distinction is not particularly important. Most authors like to mix these two metres in one kind of verse which are then called *upajAti*; that is why we are treating them together here. The metre is thus (first syllable optionally short or long), long, short, long, long, short, short, long, short, long, long. For devotees, the most familiar verses in this metre in the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition are found in Vishwanath Chakravarti's *GurvaSTaka*. Many of the verses are pure *indravajrA*, each line beginning with a long syllable, but others in the same *aSTaka* are *upajAti*, such as *nikuJja-yUno rati-keli-siddhyai*, which starts with a short. It does not make much difference.

Caesura in this metre is somewhat irregular, usually 5/6, but might be 4/7 or 6/5 and sometimes mixed. In *GurvaSTaka* we find a regular caesura after five syllables even though it splits words in two. *saMsAra-dAvA nala-lIDha-loka- 5/6 trANaya-kArUNya-ghanAghanatvam 6/5 prAptasya kalyANa-guNArNavasya 6/5 vande guroH zri caraNAravindam 5/6* In Bhagavad Gita 2.26, the caesura comes after six syllables. This is an exception, because the last syllable before yati is short:

vAsAMsi jIrNANI yathA vihAya
navAni gRhNAti naro 'parANi.
tathA zarIrANi vihAya jIrNAny
anyAni saMyAti navAni deHI

Most of the eleventh chapter, "The Universal Form", is written in *upajAti* metre.

kAlo 'smi loka-kSaya-kRt pravRddho
lokAn samAhartum iha pravRttaH
Rte'pi tvAM na bhaviSyanti sarve
ye 'vasthitAH pratyanyikeSu yodhAH

tasmAt tvam uttiSTha yazo labhasva
jivA zatrUn bhUGkSva rAjyaM samRddham
mayaivete nihatAH pUrvam eva
nimitta-mAtraM bhava savyasAcinú

droNaM ca bhISmaM ca jayadrathaM ca
karNaM tathAnyAn api yodhavIrAn
mayA hatAMs tAn jahi mA vyatiSTha
yudhyasva jetAsi raNe sapatnAn

If you chant *indravajrA* and *upendravajrA* verses regularly, you will observe that the caesura is not as important as it will be in the metres of fourteen syllables and more.

(ii) *svAgatA* and *rathoddhata*

There are a number of other kinds of *triSTubh* metres, of which I will give some examples here. *svAgatA* and *rathoddhata* are sister metres. The caesura usually comes after three syllables in these metres, but occasionally after the fourth or the fifth. The first few verses of the 35th chapter of BhP's tenth canto, known as *yugala-gIta* are written in *svAgatA* with caesura after four or five syllables. By the way, the reason that this chapter has this name is because the verses are written in pairs (*yugala*).

vAma-bAhu-dhRta-vAma-kapola
valgita-bhrur adharArpita-veNum
komalAGgulibhir Azrita-mArgaM
gopya Irayati yatra mukundaH

vyoma-yAna-vanitAH saha siddhair
vismitAs tad upadhArya salajjAH
kAma-mArgaNa-samarpita-cittAH
kazmalaM yayur apasmRta-nIvyaH

Once again, if you want a consistent caesura, you have to split the words. So it is not so important as in other, longer metres.

(iii) *rAjahaMsI*

This particular variety of *triSTubh* is has a more regular caesura after six syllables.

Short-short-short, long-short-long long-short-long-short-long

This metre is most noticeably found in the *gopI-gIta*, chapter 31 of the *rAsa-lIIA*.

jayati te» dhikam janmanA vrajaH
zrayata indirA zazvad atra hi
dayita dRzyatAM dikSu tAvakAs
tvayi dhRtAsavAs tvAM vicinvate

zarad-udAzaye sAdhu-jAta-sat-
sarasijodara-zrI-muSA dRzA
suratanAtha te zulka-dAsikAH
varada nighnato neha kiM vadhaH

(3) JagatI Metres. (12 syllables)

The third and last of the primitive Sanskrit metres, by which I mean ones which can be found in very early Sanskrit literature, including the Veda, is called *jagatI*. This metre has 12 syllables to a line and the caesura can come after 5, 6 or 7 syllables. The primary type of *jagatI* is an *upajAti* like that of the *triSTubh* which we have just explained, where the first syllable can be either long or short. So the metre is:

short-long short-long long-short-short-long short-long short-long

with the first syllable optionally long. Much of the *Brahma-stava* (10.14) is in this metre. The *gopis*» lament to the creator god or fate (*vidhAtA*), when Akrura comes to take Krishna and Balaram away to Mathura in BhP x.39.19-30, is in this metre.

aho vidhAtas tava na kvacid dayA
saMyojya maitryA praNayeNa dehinaH
tAMz cAkRtArthAn vinuyaGkSy apArthakaM
vikrIDitaM te» rbhaka-ceSTitaM yathA

yas tvAM pradarzyAsita-kuntalAvRtaM
mukunda-vaktraM sukapolam unnasam
zokApanoda-smita-keza-sundaram
karoSi pArokSyam asAdhu te kRtam

There are a large number of other *jagatI* metres. The only one worth mentioning here is *druta-vilambita*. The most famous example of this metre, which is fairly popular, is in BhP 1.1.3. Caesura is usually prescribed after four, but in this example comes after seven.

nigama-kalpa-taror galitaM phalam
zuka-mukhAd amRta-drava-saMyutam
pibata bhAgavataM rasam Alayam
muhur aho rasika bhuvi bhAvukAH

The ripened fruit of the Vedic desire tree made sweeter by the nectar from the mouth of Shuka; this is the Bhagavatam; oh connoisseurs of poetry, oh knowers of the sentiments, drink its juice constantly until the end on your time on this earth.

(4) Vasanta-tilakA

There are a number of thirteen syllabled metres, but I have not found any examples in BhP. One fourteen syllabled metre is very popular throughout Sanskrit *kAvya*, and is also found frequently in the Srimad-Bhagavatam, especially in the chapters dealing with *madhura-rasa*. It is called *vasanta-tilakA*, which means the “the ornament of spring.” From this point on, caesura is much more regular than in the first few examples that have been given. In *vasantA*, natural caesura after eight syllables is held consistently by all poets.

long-long-short-long short-short-short long
short short long short long long.

dA-dA-da-dA da-da-da-dA
da-da-dA da-dA-dA

Examples are the first *madhura-rasa* verses in the tenth canto, the *pUrva-rAga* (x.15.42-43), as well as the *veNu-gIta* (x.21.7-19). In *rAsa-lIlA*, the appeal of the gopis to Krishna not to reject them (x.29.31-41) and a few other verses including the last of the *rAsa-lIlA* (x.33.40):

vikrIDitaM vraja-vadhUbhir idaM ca viSNoH
zraddhAnvito 'nuzRNuyAd atha varNayed vA
bhaktiM parAm bhagavati pratilabhya kAmAM
hRd-rogam Azv apahinoty acireNa dhIraH

Note that the words *apahinoty acireNa* are enjambed on the caesura. Because of sandhi, the ty at the end of *apahinoti* is read with the following a as a part of *acireNa*: *hRd-rogam Azv apahinoty acireNa dhIraH*.

Uddhava’s glorification of the gopis (x.47.58-62), Rukmini’s letter to Krishna (BhP x.52.37-43), two famous verses in the meeting at Kurukshetra (x.82.40 and CC Antya 4.153) and (x.82.49, CC Madhya 1.81 and 13.136), which we will chant here:

Ahuz ca te nalina-nAbha padAravindaM
yogezvarair hRdi vicintyam agAdha-bodhaiH
saMsAra-kUpa-patitoddharaNAvalambaM
geha-juSAm api manasy udiyAt sadA naH

Verses not in *madhura-rasa* also, such as the prayers by Kaliya (BhP x.16) and the maGgala prayers to Shukadeva at the beginning of Suta Goswami’s recital (BhP 1.2.2-3) are also in *vasanta-tilakA*.

yaM pravrajantam anupetam apeta-kRtyam
dvaipAyano viraha-kAtara AjuhAva
putreti tan-mayatayA taravo 'bhinedus
taM sarva-bhUta-hRdayaM munim Anato 'smi

This is one of the most popular metres in Sanskrit *kAvya*. About 40% of *vilApa-*

kusumAjjali, 20% of *rAdhA-rasa-sudhA-nidhi*, 23% of the verse in *Ananda-vRndAvana-campU*, 10% of the verse in Rupa’s plays, is in *vasantA*. Of the lyric metres, it is second only to *zArDUla-vikrIDita*, which we will be seeing presently.

(5) Longer metres

The next group of metres are primarily found in poetical works. They are completely absent from most puranic literature with the exception of the BhP, which is one of the reasons that the Bhagavata is so special.

(i) *mAlinI*: “the garlanded woman”

We have already seen an example of *mAlinI* from Raghunath Das’s *VilApa-kusumAjjali*. It has fifteen syllables to a line with a very clear caesura after eight syllables. It is one of the easiest metres to recognize because each line starts with six short syllables followed by two longs. *mAlinI* is also found in the Bhagavatam, in the section of BhP known as the *bhramara-gIta* (x.47.12-21). One gopI, usually said to be Radha, is speaking to the bumblebee:

madhupa kitava-bandho mA spRzAGghriM sapatnyAH
kuca-vilulita-mAlA-kuGkuma-zmazrubhir naH
vahatu madhupatis tan-mAninInAM prasAdaM
yadu-sadasi viDambyam yasya dUtas tvam IdRk

Elsewhere, this metre is used in the first verse by the mahishis when feeling separation (*prema-vaicittya*) from Krishna (x.90.15). And again in one of the verses at the very end of the tenth canto, no doubt familiar to you all:

jayati jana-nivAso devakI-janma-vAdo
yadu-vara-pariSat svair dorbhir asyann adharmam
sthira-cara-vRji-nighnaH susmita-zrI-mukhena
vraja-pura-vanitAnAM vardhayan kAmadevam

Verses of this metre are found scattered throughout the Goswamis» literature, most memorably the *rAdhikASTakas* of Rupa and Raghunath, many verses of Rupa’s plays, etc.

(ii) *tUNaka*

Another nice metre of fifteen syllables to the line is *tUNaka*, which means “an archer’s quiver.” Starts with a long, and then alternating short-long.

kunkumAkta-kAJcanAbja-garva-hAri-gaurabhA
pItanAJcitAbja-gandha-kIrti-nindi-saurabhA
vallaveza-sUnu-sarva-vAJchitArtha-sAdhika
mahyam Atma-pAda-padma-dAsyadAstu rAdhika

karavinda-kAnti-nindi-citra-patra-zATika
kRSNa-matta-bhRGga-keli-phulla-puSpa-vATika
kRSNa-nitya-saGgamArtha-padma-bandhu-rAdhika

mahyam Atma-pAda-padma-dAsyadAstu rAdhika

*saukumArya-sRSTa-pallavAli-kIrti-nigrahA
candra-candanotpalendu-sevya-zIta-vigrahA
svAbhimarSa-vallavIza-kAma-tApa-bAdhika
mahyam Atma-pAda-padma-dAsyadAstu rAdhika*

(iii) mandAkrAntA

The name of this metre translates as “Slowly overcome.” This lyrical metre of 17 syllables to the line is very distinctive for having a pronounced caesura at two places on each line. First four longs, caesura, then five shorts and a long, caesura, then long, short-long-long, short-long-long.

dA-dA-dA-dA /
da-da-da-da-da-dA /
dA-da-dA-dA da-da-dA

This metre was made famous by Kalidas in his *meghadUta*. Rupa Goswami’s *uddhava-sandeza* is also in this metre. There are no examples that I know of in BhP. We have already cited Raghunath Das’s verse previously:

*nAma-zreSThaM manum api zacIputram atra svarUpaM
rUpaM tasyAgrajam urupurIm mAthurIM goSThavATIm
rAdhA-kuNDaM girivaram aho rAdhika-mAdhavAzAm
prApto yasya prathita-kRpayA zri-guruM taM nato ‘smi*

Svarupa Damodar’s famous verse describing the three desires of Krishna which lead to his incarnation as Caitanya MahAprabhu, quoted in CC Adi 1.6, is in this metre.

*zri-rAdhAyAH pranaya-mahimA kIdRzo vAnayaivA-
svAdyo yenAdbhuta-madhurimA kIdRzo vA madIyaH
saukhyaM cAsyA mad-anubhavataH kIdRzaM veti lobhAt
tad-bhAvADhyaH samajani zacI-garbha-sindhau harInduH*

(iv) zikhariNI

This lyrical metre of 17 syllables to the line with caesura after six syllables is also very distinctive. Once again there are no examples that I know of in BhP. Krishna Das Kaviraja’s famous *maGgala* verse to Chaitanya is in this metre:

*yad advaitaM brahmopaniSadi tad apy asya tanubhA
ya AtmAntaryAmI puruSa iti so» syAMza-vibhavaH
SaDaizvaryaiH pUrNo ya iha bhagavAn sa svayam ayaM
sa caitanyAt kRSNAj jagati paratattvaM param iha*

The first six syllables contain one short and then five longs. After the caesura there is a run of five short syllables before ending the line with two longs, three shorts and a long.

da-dA-dA-dA-dA-dA
da-da-da-da-da-dA-dA da-da-da-da

Rupa and Raghunath's *caitanyaASTakas* are in this metre. Rupa Goswami's *haMsadUta* contains 142 verses in *zikhariNI*.

(iv) pRthvI

pRthvI is another metre of 17 syllables to the line which is comparatively less used than the two previously mentioned. One well-known stanza makes it worth mentioning, however. That is the following verse from *vidagdha-mAdhava* by Rupa Goswami which is found in the mangala verses of *caitanya-caritAmRta* (Adi 1.4).

*anarpita-carIM cirAt karuNayAvatIrNaH kalau
samarpayitum unnatojjvala-rasAM sva-bhakti-zriyam
hariH puraTa-sundara-dyuti-kadamba-sandIpitaH
sada hRdaya-kandare sphuratu vaH zacI-nandanaH*

This elevated, effulgent, taste of sacred rapture is the wealth of devotional love; the Lord never gives it at any time; yet, out of his mercy, he came in this Age of Quarrel to distribute this treasure to the world, becoming incarnate in his golden form. The son of Sachi is like a lion; may he dwell in your hearts forever. The caesura is after eight syllables. There is no clear grouping of longs and shorts together as is usually found in the longer metres. Even so, the rhythm is clear and distinctive:

short-long-short, short-long-short, short-long, caesura,
short-short-short, long-short-long, long-short-long.

da-dA da-da-dA da-da-dA da-da-da-dA da-dA-dA da-dA

(v) nardaTaka

There is another rarer metre with 17 syllables. Outside of BhP, I have never seen it used anywhere but in *Ananda-vRndAvana-campU* and once in *mAdhava-mahotsava*. But since an important chapter of BhP is written in this metre, I thought that I would mention it here. The chapter is BhP 10.87, the *veda-stuti*, and the verses 14 to 41 are written in *nardaTaka* metre. This metre again has lots of short syllables, but broken up frequently with longs. Starts with four shorts, long short long, caesura after seven, three shorts, long-short-short, long-short-short-long.

da-da-da-da-dA da-dA /
da-da-da-dA da-da-dA da-da-dA

The best known example of this is verse 23, which is quoted twice in CC (Madhya 8.224, 9.123) where the Vedas say that they too worship Krishna in the mood of the gopis:

*nibhRta-marun-mano 'kSa-dRDha-yoga-yujo hRdi
yan munaya upAsate tad arayo 'pi yayuH smaraNAt*

*striya urugendra-bhoga-bhuja-daNDa-viSakta-dhiyo
vayam api te samAH samadRzo 'Gghri-saroja-sudhAH*

Caesura after seven. There is one irregularity in the metre of this particular verse. The word, bho-ga, in the third line has been split over the caesura. But then, BhP is rather tolerant of irregularities...

(vi) zArdUla-vikrIDita.

zArdUla-vikrIDita is quite a common metre despite being one of the longest. Its name means “the play of the lion.” It is a lyric metre very much favoured by classical poets and verses such as *yaH kaumAra-haraH*, etc., are in this metre. To give you an idea of the popularity of *zArdUla*, in the collection of poetry compiled by Sridhara Pandit, a contemporary of Jayadeva Goswami, 44% of the 2380 stanzas are in this metre, that is more than a thousand. Jayadeva himself uses it frequently in *Gita Govinda* and there are literally hundreds of examples to be found in the plays of Rupa and the campUs of Jiva and Kavi KarNapUra. There are nineteen syllables to the line. Caesura is invariably after 12.

Long-long-long short-short-long short-long short-short-short-long /
Long-long-short long-long-short long:

dA-dA-dA da-da-dA-da-dA da-da-da-dA /
dA-dA-da-dA-dA da-dA

Only a couple of examples are to be found in BhP, however, though these are appropriately enough, at its beginning and end. Thus, the *janmAdyasya* verse is in this metre, as is *dharmAH projhitaH kaitavo 'tra*. The mangala verse to the concluding chapter of the Bhagavatam, used as one of the prayers to be chanted before reciting Bhagavad Gita, is as follows:

*yaM brahma-varuNendra-rudra-marutAH stuvanti divyaiH stavaiH
vedaiH sAGga-pada-kramopaniSadair gAyanti yaM sAmagAH
dhyAnAvasthita-tad-gatena manasA pazyanti yaM yogino
yasyAntaM na viduH surAsura-gaNA devAya tasmai namaH*

Another noteworthy verse in this metre is found in BhP x.14.35 from Brahma-stava.

*eSAM ghoSa-nivAsinAm uta bhavAn kiM deva rAteti naz
ceto vizva-phalAt phalaM tvad-aparaM kutrApy ayan muhyati
sad-veSAd iva pUtanApi sakulA tvAm eva devApitA
yad-dhAmArtha-suhRt-priyatma-tanaya-prANAzayAs tvat-kRte*

(vii) srag-dharA

sragdharA (“wearing the garland”) is the longest lyrical metre used in Sanskrit poetry. There are longer metres, but they are very rarely used. This is again a very distinctive metre with caesura after each group of seven syllables. The first group in each line has mostly long syllables, the second mostly short, the third primarily long again. Thus:

dA-dA-dA-dA da-da-dA da-da-da-da-da-da-da /
dA-da-dA-dA da-da-dA

Thus, in Krishna Das Kaviraj's (or Rupa Goswami's, depending on whose authority you accept) *rAdhA-kRSNayor aSTa-kAlIya-lIla-smaraNa-maGgala-stotram*.

*zrI-rAdhA-prANa-bandhoz caraNa-kamalayoH keza-zeSAdy-agamyA
yA sAdhyA prema-sevA vraja-carita-parair gADha-laulyaika-labhyA
sA syAt prAptA yayA tAM prathayitum adhuna mAnasIm asya sevAM
bhAvyAM rAgAdhva-panthair vrajam anu caritaM naityikaM tasya naumi*

Conclusion

So to conclude, if you wish to get full enjoyment from learning to read and chant Sanskrit verse, you should try to master the intricacies of Sanskrit metres. Especially if you want to memorize verses, it is a good idea to analyze carefully the caesurae and so on. This will often help, not only in chanting the verse, but also in understanding it, as the meaning and the verse structure are often related. We have gone over some of the major ones here. There are, of course, many others, especially the song metres of Jayadeva and the *AryA* metres which are very much liked by Rupa in his plays and are also found in great quantities in JIva Goswami's *gopAla-campU*. These will have to wait for another occasion.

If you wish to have a copy of the tape, please don't hesitate to drop me a line. I can be reached on email at jankbrz@yahoo.com. In the meantime, enjoy the nectar of the Bhagavatam: *pibata bhAgavataM rasam Alayam*.