

## Some Facets of the Theravāda Oral Tradition

Aruna K. Gamage

This article probes some basic features of the Theravāda oral tradition such as the traditional viewpoint on the *Tipiṭaka* and its interrelation with Nibbāna, effort in preserving the *Tipiṭaka*, characteristics of a good reciter, methods used in order to develop a sound memory, and encouraging the best posture for the recitation and appropriate voice modulation. In addition, unfamiliar cadences utilized by the Theravāda tradition for the purpose of recitation will be discussed.

(1) In order to preserve a large corpus of texts of the *Tipiṭaka* for a long time in its pristine purity, the Theravāda tradition seems to have utilized several devices such as recitation, teaching, discussion and debate on knotty points, etc. These (i.e. recitation etc.) are the different aspects of the ‘career of textual studies’ (*ganthadhura*)<sup>1</sup>. Especially at a period when written sources were considerably scarce for academic purposes, the oral tradition was of paramount importance. As this tradition fervently emphasized, ‘when the canon disappears conduct also disappears. Alternatively, when the Canon is well established, conduct also becomes well established.’<sup>2</sup> This transmission process of the *Tipiṭaka* as evidenced in the Pāli Commentaries is not a mere academic process, though manifold scholastic methods have been utilized in it. As insisted in early Buddhism and the Theravāda tradition as well, the essential outcome of mastering *dhamma* is one’s spiritual development or attainment. The person, who practices *dhamma* in order to denounce others, acquires no applause in Buddhism.<sup>3</sup> In this regard, the *Majjhima-nikāya Aṭṭhakathā* (=MA) explains the Theravāda viewpoint as follows: “Though a person having completely memorized the whole *Tipiṭaka*, lives recollecting it in progressive and regressive order (*heṭṭhūpariyamkaronto*) with its meaning (*pālito ca atthato ca*), and textual sequence (*anusandhito*)<sup>4</sup> but, without even a slight awareness of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and substancelessness, then he does not possess a knowledge of the path (*maggen’āgatāya paññāya abhāvato*),<sup>5</sup> cannot be considered as a wise person (*paññavāti na vattabbo*), only an educated one (*viññānacarito nām’esa*).”<sup>6</sup> What some Theravāda teachers wholeheartedly expected was the spiritual development of their students rather than their scholarship of the Canon.<sup>7</sup> This shows that just academic erudition in the *Tipiṭaka*, was not what was appreciated by Theravādins.

(2) But on the contrary, as the Commentaries show, some passages, sentences and phrases of the *Tipiṭaka* were subjected to subtle censure

(*infra.*§5) by some Theravāda masters though it was painstakingly preserved with great reverence by them. Hence, it is not possible to identify this process of transmission as a totally religious or pious activity. The tradition affirms the recitation and study of the *Tipiṭaka* as an exercise obligatory on the *sangha* for the elimination of mental defilements. “If someone keeps the *Tipiṭaka* in memory, reflecting on its meaning, studying, reciting, and teaching it completely, considering its gradual progressive sequence, in him defilements gain no foothold.”<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the tradition puts forward five points (*pañcadhammā*) that facilitate the subduing of mental dullness. (*mohadhātu*)<sup>9</sup> and urges one to overcome it through associating with the five points or practising them. These five factors<sup>10</sup> apparently were connected with the process of transmission. i. Association with teachers (*garūsaṃvāsa*)<sup>11</sup>, ii. Reciting of canonical texts and making others recite them (*uddesa*)<sup>12</sup> iii. Interrogation of the meaning of recited texts or areas (*uddiṭṭhapariṭṭhāna*)<sup>13</sup> iv. Listening to *dhamma* at the proper time (*kālena dhammassavana*) and v. discriminating or inferring by means of the knowledge acquired (*thānāṭṭhānavinichaya*)<sup>14</sup> the possibility or impossibility of a thing. Hence, it is clear that the tradition has accepted studying and reciting the *Tipiṭaka* as an effective remedy for the elimination of mental defilements and frustrations.

(3) Many ancient teachers in this tradition, who flourished in Sri Lanka, seem to have fully dedicated their whole life to the perfection of this activity. [When we compare the moderns’ dedication towards academic study with the ancients’, it is clear that the latter group holds a pre-eminent place]. Even during the period of the terrible famine that existed in Sri Lanka throughout 12 years, seven hundred and sixty Theravāda monks were able to preserve the *Tipiṭaka* without losing even a single syllable (*sāṭṭhakathete piṭake ekakkharampi ekabyañjanampi anāsetvā*) through their assiduous continuance of the dynamic process of reciting.<sup>15</sup> *Vinayaṭṭhakathā* (=VA) records an interesting narrative regarding the protection of *Niddesapāli* by Theravāda monks.<sup>16</sup> Mahādhammarakkhitatthera of Tulādhārapabbata,<sup>17</sup> *Tipiṭaka* Mahāsiṅgāthera of Anurādhapura<sup>18</sup> are two other remarkable characters. They did nothing else throughout their lifetime other than reciting and teaching the *Tipiṭaka* for the sake of its preservation. This procedure of recitation and study of the *Tipiṭaka* was continued with the mutual co-operation of teacher and student. In this, we see the Theravāda tradition’s affinity to the interrelation between teacher and student that persisted in the *Upaniṣad* texts in search of truth.<sup>19</sup> The teacher is highly esteemed in Buddhism<sup>20</sup> yet, the student should not be a fan or blind follower of the teacher. He should only accept the good points of the teacher scorning his inferior traits. As *Dīghanikāyaṭṭhakathā* (=DA) says, ‘when the teacher steps upon excrement, fire, a thorn or a black serpent and when

he climbs up a stake (which is used to impale people) or when he takes deadly poison etc., the student should not emulate all of them.’<sup>21</sup> Some teachers of this confraternity accepted his student’s opinion in public spurning his own viewpoint that he had held up to that time. The narrative of Tipiṭaka-Cūlanāgathera and Tipiṭakacūlasummathera is proof of this.<sup>22</sup> As Ven. Buddhaghosa says in this regard, “ancient elders are not covetous. They don’t hold on to their own wish or viewpoint like holding on to a heap of sugarcane, and instead accept the actual fact rejecting the fallacious.”<sup>23</sup>

(4) As we are told by the commentaries, *Theravādins* were not always extreme conservatives though they represented that tradition. For they were in need of ascertaining the truth or the accurate interpretation of some dubious places in the Pāli canon (*infra*.§5), and did not hesitate to engage themselves in vigorous argumentations with each other. The aim of those argumentations was not to denounce others but to unravel and get a fixed solution for the cryptic, knotty points of the canon. One important characteristic of these argumentative monks was that they were not attached to their own opinions unlike the policy of a sophist who frequently attempts to establish his own belief.<sup>24</sup> What they wanted was to accept the reality and deny the heresy. For the proper sustainability of a more trustworthy tradition of transmission they very enthusiastically engaged themselves in doctrinal controversies with other Buddhist counterparts and with their own members as well. These various arguments focused on the subject matter of the canon and enabled them to gain a deep understanding of it. Thorough understanding makes for easier memory retention. (*infra*§9).

(5) Sometimes, there was no uniformity in the canon and its interpretation even among all the members of this tradition. Some of them did not wish to accept the common Theravāda *status quo* standpoint. They posed questions concerning the number of the texts, phraseology and on more apt interpretations and so on. Sudinna thera who can be identified as a one of the leading members of this confraternity, rejected some texts of the *Khuddakanikāya*, namely, *Dhammapada*, *Jātaka*, *Paṭisambhidā*, *Niddesa*, *Vimānavatthu*, *Petavatthu*, *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā*, asserting they are not Buddha’s teaching (*taṃ sabbaṃ paṭipakkhipivā*).<sup>25</sup> He seems to have believed that the discourses of the canon which are not designated as ‘*sutta*’ are not the Buddha’s own teaching. Goṇaraviyatthera\* (in *Be Codanālayatthera*) argued that a certain prose passage of *Mahāsacchakasutta*<sup>26</sup> is not a Buddhaword (*abuddhavacanam nām’etaṃ padaṃ*).<sup>27</sup> In the explanation of ‘*abhijjhā visamalobho cittassa upakkilesa*’ in *Vatṭhasutta*,<sup>28</sup> some *Theravāda* teachers considered *abhijjhā* and *visamalobha* as separate unwholesome concomitants. Therefore, they interpreted *abhijjhā* as ‘the

craving for one's own property' and *visamalobha* as the 'craving for the property of others.' Regarding this, a teacher in the Theravāda tradition (who remains anonymous) protested adducing a passage from *Vibhaṅga*<sup>29</sup> in support of his view. "Why do you, he asked, consider them as separate concomitants? They cannot be detached. These two terms denote the same word though they have diverse syllables (*ekattham etaṃ byañjanameva nānaṃ*)."<sup>30</sup> Cūlatissatthera of Uruvelā stressed that the middle part of *Bāhiraphassanānattasutta* that describes the interrelatedness of causative factors such as perception, volition, contact, etc., in accordance with the theory of dependent co-origination,<sup>31</sup> should be understood having rotated the order of its sentences (*pāḷiṃ parivattetvā*).<sup>32</sup> As he opined, *phassa* and *vedanā* that occur in the middle of this discourse, should be put at the end in order to get the proper order.<sup>33</sup> It is obvious from the foregoing accounts that the erudition of Theravādins in *dhamma* was acquired by the continuous study of the *Tipiṭaka*. The transmission process of Theravādins is therefore, neither a totally religious activity nor a monotonous procedure of mere recitation of the *Tipiṭaka*. They very earnestly engaged in this task experiencing the ecstasy of studying the *dhamma*. Recitation is, in fact, only one of several integral units in this process (*infra*. §12). This activity, i.e. recitation, undoubtedly has become a very pleasant section for the reciters since it is endowed with many enjoyable poetic features such as metre (*infra*. §14-§15).

(6) Commentaries provide the bulk of evidence for the Tipiṭaka recitation of ancient Sri Lankan monks. The open space in front of Suvanṇamālicetiya and the sacred Bodhi-tree, the ground floor of Lohapāsāda were some of the popular places for their recitations.<sup>34</sup> The purpose of this recitation was to establish a fixed and accurate memory of the *Tipiṭaka*. The preciseness of the memory holds a specific place in this process. Nevertheless, intrinsically, memory is subject to rapid bewilderment and blanking out (memory lapses). Significantly, the Theravāda tradition clearly understands this tendency of the memory. Though some persons, so *Udānaṭṭhakathā* (=UA) remarks, are very fluent in grasping the meaning (of the *Tipiṭaka*) at the lesson, but they perform many blunders, dropping words and misplacing the proper order when they recollect them later (*ekacco uggahaṇakāle sammā uggahetvā pipacchā sajjhāyādivasena manasikaraṇakāle byañjanāni vā micchāropeti, padapaccābhaṭṭhaṃ vā karoti*).<sup>35</sup> According to MA "some, though they study *dhamma*, are incapable of maintaining a fixed-memory. When they are being quizzed and directed by others regarding the canonical quotations which they have previously recited, as "recite, that *sutta* or that *jātaka*", they slip off, answering 'I will do so, after having re-recited and compared with other sources.'<sup>36</sup> Some, though they have mastered *dhamma* well are unable to answer properly when others

interrogate them at the beginning, end or word by word-sequence of the canon or of the commentary. They stammer; tremble, agree with the opponent with whatever he states and accepts the others viewpoint having rejected one's own standpoint.<sup>37</sup> Hence, the one, who has only a superficial memory in reciting *dhamma*, is not suited to this process because other religious opponents can easily overcome such a person. As the Theravāda confraternity always emphasizes, reciting compulsorily conduces to a good retentive power.

(7) The Theravāda tradition pays special attention not only to voice and manner of reciting, but the accuracy of pronunciation specially. Careless recitation and erroneous enunciation of words are utterly reviled by the tradition.<sup>38</sup> MA provides a detailed explanation in this respect. "Some recite embarrassingly (*tattha tattha vitthāyati*)<sup>39</sup> in some places and some recitations sound like mere gibberish or weeping (*nitthunanto, kandanto viya*) and some excitedly (*turitaturito*) recite *dhamma* in a very obnoxious tone just like 'rubbing together two kindling sticks' (*aranim manthento viya*)<sup>40</sup>, or 'munching a piece of hot solid food' (*uṇhakhādānīyaṃ khādanto viya*) and also just like an 'iguana creeping in panic through a heap of dried leaves'. (*purāṇapaṇṇantaresu caramānaṃ godhaṃ utthapento viya*).” They do not care about their voice as well as a pleasant tone for recitation as will be discussed (*infra*.§11). Thus, they 'from time to time recite very rapidly and sometimes very slowly (*kālena sīghaṃ kālena dandhaṃ*) and some reciters intermittently articulate in a high-tone and sometimes in a lower tone' (*kālena mahāsaddaṃ kālena khuddakasaddaṃ*). Such a person, the tradition ironically calls a 'spirit-dhamma-preacher' (*petadhammakathika*). Some of them do not pay adequate attention or concentrate on the completeness of the recitation. Consequently, they skip some passages ignoring the 'sequence of connections' (*anusandhipubbāparesu gahitaṃ gahitameva agahitaṃ agahitameva cakattvā*). Apparently, they are in an exceeding hurry to wind up their recitation, and overlook many places (*osāpento, ohāya*) when reciting. Since these types of shortcomings of reciters were very detrimental to the process of preserving the Tipiṭaka, the confraternity proclaimed a variety of techniques in order to minimize them (*infra*. §8).

(8) The *dhamma* recitation should be done very vigilantly, 'as careful as plucking out a cluster of [bodily] hair one by one with a pair of tweezers' (*ekeka lomaṃ saṇḍāsena gaṇhanto viya*)<sup>41</sup> and without dropping or skipping the canonical connections and word-sequence (*pāliya anusandhiṅca pubbāparaṅca amakkhento*).<sup>42</sup> The tradition presents several similes that clarify the rhythm of a proper recitation and its responsibility. 'Just like draining water by means of a deep drainage system' (*gambhīramātikāya udakampesento viya*),<sup>43</sup> 'preaching without

an abrupt stoppage just like the torrential tumbling down of a river in spate' (*avicchinnadhāraṃ katvāna dīsotaṃ viya pavatteti*)<sup>44</sup>; 'just like portraying a picture with a pencil' (*tūlikāya paricchindanto viya*)<sup>45</sup> and also a firm memory is esteemed by the tradition in the following way: The memory should be firm 'just as a line that is inscribed on stone' (*silāya lekhā viya*)<sup>46</sup>, 'just as a line of oil'<sup>47</sup> that is poured from a golden vessel' (*suvaṇṇaghāṭe pakkhittasīhavasā viya*).<sup>48</sup> The person who acquires a steadfast memory as described with these similes, is capable of reciting, excerpts from any given place of the canon (*asukasuttaṃ vā jātakam vā kathehīti vutte uddharitvā tameva katheti*)<sup>49</sup> without stammering or spluttering (*pāḷiyam vā aṭṭhakathāya vā heṭṭhupariyena vā padapaṭipāṭiyā vā pucchiyamāno na vitthana tina vipphandati*).<sup>50</sup> VA classifies erudite scholars into three categories<sup>51</sup> viz. 1. *Nissayam uccanaka*: Those who are freed from the teacher's dependence<sup>52</sup>, 2. *parisupaṭṭhāpaka*: Those who religiously support lay people and 3: *Bhikkhunovādaka*: those who are admonishers of the monks. Here, the acquaintance with the Pāli Canon is the main criterion to be one of them.<sup>53</sup>

(9) The awareness of the meaning of that which is being recited, as the tradition recognizes, strengthens the preservation of a sound memory. In other words, if the reciter has a proper understanding of what he recites, he can straightway treasure and store it all up in his mind. Therefore the recitation, as UA says, comes easily when the meaning of the canon is realized. (*atthe hi suṭṭu upadhārite sakkāpāḷiṃ sammā uttāretuṃ*).<sup>54</sup> As early Buddhism also emphasizes, the mere process of by-hearting without considering its meaning is pointless (*supra. §2*). Reciprocally, recitation is also helpful for treasuring facts and retaining them in the memory without misapprehension. The tradition makes out this inter-correlation between recitation and memory. As the *Visuddhimagga* says, recitation is twofold viz. verbal recitation and mental recitation.<sup>55</sup> For, these two factors are reciprocally supportive of each other and the reciter, in this process, should pay attention to both these aspects. "In whichever manner verbal recitation is performed, in such manner should recitation be done equally with the mind. Verbal recitation causes (*paccayo*) mental recitation and is supportive of the penetration of the three characteristics and helps the attainment of a supra mundane state."<sup>56</sup> As we previously noted (*supra. §2*) the tradition, here also, asserts the interrelationship between Nibbāna and every aspect of this process. The process of reciting is not confined to mere erudition in the *Tipiṭaka*. The KhpA furnishes<sup>57</sup> an important method utilized by the Theravāda tradition for the progressive development of the memory regarding recitation, named as *sattavidha-uggahakosalla*: 'The sevenfold skill in memorizing.' Though the Commentary presents this method in the explanation of 'the thirty-two-fold Aspect' (*dvattimsākāra*) it can

undoubtedly be applied over a wider scope that is relevant to the activity of recitation. This method says that one should memorize both verbally and mentally, paying enough attention to some exterior circumstances such as location, direction and so on. The activity of pondering or recollecting (*manasikāra*)<sup>58</sup> the *Tipiṭaka* also plays a vital role in this tradition. The memory that was acquired in recitation is further stabilized in this process. Recitation, as the tradition claims, is needed even in the process of pondering. Thus, even the person who is well versed in the whole canon should essentially do the verbal recitation<sup>59</sup> when he is engaged in pondering. Furthermore, in the same context, the *KhpA* and *VibhA*<sup>60</sup> speak of a tenfold skill in pondering, *dasavidhamanasikāra* that can be assumed as utilized in the Theravāda tradition for the progress of their project of transmission. Seven factors, out of these 10 factors are the methods for proper recollection while the other 3 are important references to three canonical discourses which are helpful in increasing a sound memory and for overcoming certain habitual mental states such as sloth and torpor. The former seven are as follows (together with Ven. Ñānamoli's rendering)<sup>61</sup>: 1. *anupubbato*: by following the order, 2. *nātisīghato*: not too quickly, 3. *nātisaṇikato*: not too slowly, 4. *vikkhepapaṭibāhanato*: by warding off distraction, 5. *paṇṇattisamatikkamato*: by surmounting the description, 6. *anupubbamuñcanato*: by the practice of successively letting go, 7. *appanāto*: by absorption. No doubt that these were helpful in fixing a computer type memory of the *Tipiṭaka* in the members of this tradition.

(10) Similarly, the *Theravāda* tradition seems to have paid attention to the most appropriate posture for recitation. However, the Commentaries do not provide a clear cut mental picture of the best posture for recitation. The explanation of AA on the sentence '*caṅkamādhigato samādhiciraṭṭhitiko hoti*' in *Caṅkamasutta* of the *Aṅguttaranikāya*<sup>62</sup> gives a clue as to the Theravāda viewpoint as to the most suitable posture for contemplation. 'The sign (*nimittaṃ*)<sup>63</sup>, as it says, which is contemplated by someone in the standing posture, fades away in the sitting posture and also the sign which is contemplated in the sitting posture, fades away in the lying down posture. Nevertheless, the sign which is contemplated in the walking posture among shaking objects, does not fade away even in the sitting posture and so forth (*ṭhitakena gahita-nimittaṅhi nisinnassa nassati, nisinnena gahitanimittaṃ nippannassa. caṅkamaṃ adhiṭṭhahantena*<sup>64</sup> *calitārammaṇe gahitanimittaṃ pana ṭhitassa pi nisinnassa pi nippannassa pi na nassati*).<sup>65</sup> Here, the identical word *calitārammaṇe* (among the shaking objects) that specifies the walking posture is significant since it shows there is no shaking or moving of objects in other postures. Moreover, the citation claims that the sign which is contemplated in the walking posture is immutable or imperishable (*na nassati*). It suggests that movements or

shaking of objects is supportive of keeping a fix memory. Then again, the other three postures seem quite tiresome for contemplation or recitation. For example, drowsiness descends (*middham okkamati*) into the mind in the sitting posture. Ven. Moggallāna once sat nodding and he was advised by the Buddha,<sup>66</sup> that he should “rise up from the sitting”<sup>67</sup> posture if he feels drowsiness. In contrast, the reciter’s or contemplator’s mind becomes refreshed when he recites or contemplates in the walking posture. As the walking posture is more productive of keeping a fixed memory, it is reasonable to assume that the Theravādins preferred the ‘walking posture’ also when reciting.

(11) Reciters, as the tradition’s emphasizes, must have an euphonious as well as a sonorous voice. The audibility of voice fortifies conviction not only in the hearers but also in the reciters. The pleasantness to the ear increases the listener’s desire for hearing.<sup>68</sup> In many of the discourses of the canon, the word *parimaṇḍalatā* appears to specify the characteristics of a perfect delivery.<sup>69</sup> As MA says *parimaṇḍala* means ‘the utterance which is made by perfecting the complete pronunciation of the syllables and without neglecting the tenfold awareness of letters.’<sup>70</sup> The Theravāda tradition takes this word (*parimaṇḍalatā*) as a condensed or compact term and thus says that it denotes the tenfold knowledge of words or letters as to pronunciation (*dasavidha byañjanabuddhi*)<sup>71</sup> which is helpful to preserve the verbatim accuracy of the recitation. Special attention, as VA affirms, should be paid to these factors by the reciters (*ayam suṭṭhu upalakkhetabbo*).<sup>72</sup> These factors, though they have been cited in Commentaries in relation to the accuracy of pronunciation, they are applicable even to protecting the preciseness of writings. All of these factors have been integrated in the following *gāthā*: *sithilaṃ dhanitañca dīgharassaṃ-garukaṃ lahukañca niggahītaṃ, sambandhaṃ vavatthitaṃ vimuttaṃ-dasadhābyañjanabuddhiyāpabhedo*.<sup>73</sup>

(12) *Sithila* denotes light tone or non-aspirated (*alpa-prāṇa*) letters or the letters of the first and third lines of the pentad of Pāli consonants (*pañcasu vaggasu paṭhamatatiyaṃ*) and *dhanita* denotes heavy tone or aspirated (*mahāprāṇa*) letters or the letters of the second and fourth lines (*tesveva dutiya-catutthaṃ*) of the same pentad. *Dīgha* denotes lengthening, of the letters that are sounded for a longer duration (perhaps, for more than one second) such as ā, ī, ū (*dīghena kālena vattabbaṃ ākāraḍi*) and *rassa* denotes shortening, i.e. letters have to be sounded for half the duration of the above, viz., a, i, u (*tato upaḍḍhakālena vattabbaṃ akāraḍi*). Here, the next two components i.e. *garuka* and *lahuka* refer to the metrical aspect (*chando*) of the recitation. It is true, to some extent, that the characteristics of these become similar to the previously mentioned two factors (i.e. of *dīgha* and *rassa*). The Commentary also admits the likeness (*garukanti dīghameva,*

*lahukantirassameva*) whereas roughly mentioning their difference. In this context, *garuka* denotes the syllables that should be enunciated as lengthening in spite of their shortness in terms of *metricausa* (*āyasmato buddharakkhitattherassa yassa nakkhamatīti evaṃ saṃyogaparaṃ katvā vuccati*) and *lahuka* denotes *vice versa* (*āyasmato buddharakkhitattherassa yassa nakkhamatītievaṃ asaṃyogaparaṃ katvā vuccati*). In relation to this context, Warder adduces some canonical accounts. Referring to *natthi etaṃ mama gehe* the second line of the 450<sup>th</sup> verse of *Petavatthu*, he says, the second (short) *a* of *mama* should be pronounced as a long letter (i.e. as *mamā*) and the first *e* of the *gehe* as a shortened letter.<sup>74</sup> Similarly, the long vowel *e* of *me dassa* in the second line of the 195<sup>th</sup> *gāthā* of the *Suttanipāta*<sup>75</sup> should be articulated short.<sup>76</sup> Next pair is *niggahīta* and *vimutta* which refers nasalization and non-nasalization respectively. *niggahīta*: nasalized should be pronounced with an unopened mouth (*avivaṭena mukhena*) obstructing speech organs (*karaṇāni niggahetvā*)<sup>77</sup> and not moving them and producing a nasal (*anunāsikaṃkatvā*). *vimutta*: opened or ‘oral’,\* (as Hinuber renders)<sup>78</sup> should be pronounced in a totally opposite way to *niggahīta*. i.e. with an opened mouth (*vivaṭena mukhena*) without obstructing speech-organs (*karaṇāni aniggahetvā*) and not producing a nasal (*anunāsikaṃ akatvā*). *Sambandha*: combined, means what is pronounced combining with the subsequent word (*parapadena sambandhitvā*) and *vavatthita*: separated, what is pronounced not combined with the subsequent word (*parapadena asambandhaṃ katvā*) and separated from it (*vicchinditvā*). The commentary i.e. *VA*, presents the manifold likelihoods of mispronunciation in respect of previously mentioned ten factors.<sup>79</sup> Another important fact that manifests from this exegesis is that those who preserved the *Vinaya* texts have rigidly considered the verbatim accuracy in their reciting unlike the policy of those who preserved *suttanta* texts. Though the monks, *VA* says, who preserve the tradition of *Suttapiṭaka* state that they have the tendency to replace *d* with *t* and *t* with *d*. Similarly, *c* with *j* and *j* with *c*, *y* with *k* and *k* with *y* and that the pronunciation is justifiable, the bearer of the *Vinaya* should, not implement this policy.<sup>80</sup>

(13) While reciting, the rhythmic aspect is also considered conscientiously. Rhythm also contributes to preserve a better memory of the recitation. Moreover, the process of recitation becomes a pleasant and enjoyable job to him if he performs it in accordance with the appropriate metre.<sup>81</sup> Especially in verse form, it is of vital significance. Commentaries vehemently emphasize the utility of verses.<sup>82</sup> The Buddha claims ‘metre is the basis for the verse’ (*chando nidānaṃ gāthānaṃ*).<sup>83</sup> According to the commentary of this verse, the metres beginning with *gāyatti* are intended here. Before composing a verse, the Commentary says, the poet is compulsively urged to decide on a metre appropriate to

the very theme or to the context. Accordingly, metre is called ‘pre-establishment of the verse’: *pubbapaṭṭhāpanagāthā*. It means a suitable metre has to be decided on before composing a verse. The Sub-commentary expands the scope of metre saying ‘Out of the twenty six fold metre, *chando* here means, metres beginning with *gāyatti* up to *ukatti*.<sup>84</sup> *Gāyattī* metre consists of six syllables per each line and *ukatti* of twenty six syllables. However, we cannot find the verses up to *ukatti* metre in the Pāli Canon. Majority of the verses of the canon belongs to the *anuṣṭubh* metre that is endowed with eight syllables per line and the rest to the *jaḡatī* metre up to *Śakvarī* metre. All of these metres have several cadences i.e. *vutta* or *vatta* (Skt. *vr̥tta*)<sup>85</sup> that assist the recitation to preserve the rhythm in reciting. Out of these two terms, commentaries typically use the latter to denote cadences. Interestingly *āyatakaḡitassara* means deviation of the cadence if we accept the legitimacy of AA’s and VA’s explanations on *ḡitassarasutta* of *Aṅguttaranikāya* and *khuddakavattihukkhandhaka* of the *Cullavagga* where the Buddha prohibits the recitation of *dhamma* with a long-drawn plainsong voice (*āyatakena ḡitassarena*) respectively.<sup>86</sup> VA explains it as follows: *āyataka* means ‘the recitation which is performed having digressed from a particular cadence and having skipped syllables.’<sup>87</sup> Therefore it is reasonable to accept that the Buddha also permitted the recitation of the *dhamma* in accordance with the appropriate metre. In the latter canonical account, we see that the Buddha allows intoning (*sarabhañña*) when reciting the *dhamma*<sup>88</sup> VA recognizes *sarabhañña* as an application of suitable metrical cadences in reciting.

(14) Significantly, the explanation of the aforementioned (*supra*.§13) two words (i.e. *āyataka* & *sarabhañña*) discloses the set of unfamiliar metrical cadences which were utilized by the Theravāda tradition in the process of recitation. As this account shows, metrical cadences (*vatta*-[s] or *vutta*-[s]) have been applied by this tradition to both modes of recitation viz. verse and prose. ‘There are three cadences in *dhamma*, VA says, 1. The cadence for the recitation of *sutta*-[s] (*suttantavatta*)<sup>89</sup>, 2. for *jātaka*-[s] (*jātakavatta*) and 3. for *gāthā*-[s] (*gāthāvatta*).’<sup>90</sup> Out of these three modes of cadences the third one i.e. *gāthāvatta* obviously deals with verses. No doubt the tradition has used these *gāthāvatta*-[s] when reciting verse sections of the canon. But the scope and the way of reciting of the first one i.e. of *suttantavatta* is quite uncertain since they also have already been lost (*infra*§15). Surely, there must be a considerable difference in the metrical aspect between the *suttantavatta* and *gāthāvatta*. As the majority of *suttanta*-[s] of the canon comprises both prose and verse sections, it is justifiable to think that *suttantavatta*-[s] are connected with both of these aspects though the *gāthāvatta* is totally connected with the verse aspect of the canon. It is clear from this account that the tradition has employed distinctive cadences for the

recitation of prose sections of the canon. But no opinion can be found regarding prose cadences in the prevailing metrical works such as *Vuttodaya*, *Vṛttaratnākara* etc., although divergent cadences for verses are demonstrated in them. The second mode, i.e. *jātakavatta* is rather hard to ascertain. However, a doubtless fact is that *jātakavatta*-[s] have been utilized in reciting the content of *Jātakapāḷi* which is incorporated in *Khuddakanikāya* but not of *jātakatṭhakathā*. The characteristics of *jātakavatta* seem to differ from that of *gāthāvatta* since the latter deals only with verses. In fact, *Jātakapāḷi* consists of both verse and prose forms though some scholars have hastily expressed that “it consists of *gāthā*[s] or stanzas only.”<sup>91</sup> Especially, it can be noted that almost of the *Kuṇāḷajātaka* in *Jātakapāḷi* is in prose form although it is only in few places interrupted with several verses.<sup>92</sup> The *Kuṇāḷajātaka*, as K. R. Norman states, “is unique in the *Jātaka* collection in that it alone contains prose which is regarded as canonical.”<sup>93</sup> It is apparent that the tradition has applied special cadences to recite *Jātaka*-[s]. The application of distinctive cadences for the recitation of *Jātaka*-[s] reveals an important propensity in recitation policy of the Theravāda tradition. Had the tradition considered *Jātakapāḷi* as a text that consists only of verses, *gāthāvatta* would be applied in recitation. Alternatively had it been considered a miscellaneous text with verses as well as prose-passages similar to the position of *suttanta*-[s], which comprise both these modes by the tradition, *suttantavatta*-[s] would have been applied for the recitation. Here, an obvious fact is that the view point of the tradition towards the recitation of *Jātaka*-[s] is rather peculiar. Perhaps the tradition has carried out a distinctive criterion for the recitation of *Jātaka*-[s] specified as *jātakavatta*-[s] considering their subject matter or theme, notwithstanding their structure.

(15) Intoning (*sarabhañña*) in reciting is very much what is expected by the tradition. As we are told by the commentaries, *sarabhañña* signifies the application of 32 cadences in reciting. As VA nominates<sup>94</sup> some of them are *taraṅgavatta* [the cadence that moves up and down like a wave?]<sup>95</sup>, *taraṅgabhedavatta* [the cadence that replicates the ascending and descending waves of the sea?],<sup>96</sup> *dhohakavatta* [the cadence with pure or clear notation?]<sup>97</sup>, *galitavatta* [the cadence of flowing out. In accordance with all the above-mentioned cadences, AAT adds *bhāgaggahakavatta* [the cadence that partially bears rhythmic form?]<sup>98</sup> to the same context. Since some important details on these 32 fold cadences such as the regulations regarding the articulation (*uccāraṇavidhānāni*), etc., have already been lost (*naṭṭhapayogāni*)<sup>99</sup> we are incapable of getting a vivid picture on the structure of them. Though the freedom has been given to the reciter to select the cadences for reciting according to his preference (*tesuyamicchati*, *taṃkātumlabhati*)<sup>100</sup> it is not difficult to decide that the Theravāda tradition has thoroughly expected the accuracy

of pronunciation in all of these events since we are often cautioned by commentaries with advisory statements as follows: “Having not destroyed all the syllables” (*sabbesampadabyañjanam avināsetvā*)<sup>101</sup> “without changing them” (*vikāraṃ akatvā*)<sup>102</sup> “without adding extra syllables” (*adhikamattāyuttam... akatvā*).<sup>103</sup>

## ABBREVIATIONS

*Be*=Burmese edition

*Cy*= commentary

*Cties*= commentaries

*Ibid*= *ibidem* i.e., the same place

*Infra*= below

*Op. cit.* = *opus citatum est*, i.e., the work has been cited

*Supra*= see above

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*Aṅguttaranikāya-aṭṭhakathā-ṭīkā* (=AAT)  
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*Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* (=DhpA)  
*Dhammasaṅganīaṭṭhakathā* (=DhsA)  
*Dīghanikāya* (=D)  
*Dīghanikāya-aṭṭhakathā* (=DA)  
*Dīghanikāya-aṭṭhakathā-ṭīkā* (=DAT)  
*Itivuttaka-aṭṭhakathā* (ItvA)  
*Khuddakapāṭha-aṭṭhakathā* (=KhpA)  
*Majjhimanikāya* (=M)  
*Majjhimanikāya-aṭṭhakathā* (=MA )  
*Majjhimanikāya-aṭṭhakathā-ṭīkā* (=MAT)  
*Milindapañha*(=MP)  
*Paṭisambhidāmagga-aṭṭhakathā* (=PtsmA)  
*Pācityādiyojanāpāli*(=Pātyo)  
*Petavatthu* (=Pv)  
*Sāratthadīpanī* (=Sādp)  
*Samyuttanikāya* (=S)  
*Samyuttanikāya-aṭṭhakathā* (=SA)  
*Samyuttanikāya-aṭṭhakathā-ṭīkā* (=SAT)  
*Suttanipāta* (=Sn)  
*Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā*(=SnA)  
*Theragāthā* (=Th)  
*Udāna-aṭṭhakathā* (=UdA )

*Vibhaṅga* (=Vibh)  
*Vibhaṅga-aṭṭhakathā* (=VibhA)  
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*Vimativinodanī* (=Vimat)  
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## NOTES

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- \* Except otherwise mentioned all the references of this article are in PTS editions and translations.
- <sup>1</sup> Lanman, p. 149. ‘*the burden of the books*’, i.e. *of studying the scriptures, explained as one who knows by heart one, two, or all Nikāyas*-PED, Dhpa, i p.05
- <sup>2</sup> AA i p. 92
- <sup>3</sup> S ii pp. 204-5, M, i p.133
- <sup>4</sup> sv: *anusandhiconnection, (logical) conclusion, application*-PED, p. 43., *connection, sequence ( between text elements)*- CPD, p. 221., *sequence (of meaning), (logical ) connection; application*-DOP, vol i, p.140
- <sup>5</sup> MAT ii p. 339
- <sup>6</sup> MA ii p. 339
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid. ii pp. 293-4
- <sup>8</sup> VibhA p. 297, PtsmA, i p.169
- <sup>9</sup> *mohadhātu* is a synonym for *moha*. *mohadhātūtimoho*-MAT, ii p.74. See *mohasv: stupidity, dullness of mind & soul, delusion, bewilderment, infatuation*- PED, p. 543
- <sup>10</sup> MA ii p.89
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup> MAT Be ii p.74. See also *svuddesa : pointingout, setting forth, proposition, exposition, indication, programme*- PED, p.136.,CPD vol ii p. 414, DOP, p. 428

- 13 MAT *Be* ii p.74  
 14 PED, p. 624., See also:MA, ii p. 89  
 15 AA i p. 92  
 16 VA iii p. 695. See: Norman, K. R. 1997, p.56  
 17 *VismBe* i p.93  
 18 DA iii pp.727-8  
 19 MU p. 01  
 20 Sn p. 55, Norman, K. R.2006, p. 37  
 21 DA i p. 37.  
 22 D ii p. 290., M, i p. 56, DA, iii pp. 744-5. see also MA,ii p. 231  
 23 DA iii p. 745, MA,i p. 231  
 24 Viṇḍavādīsv: *a sophist, arguer*-PED, p. 620, Tilakaratne, 2002, p. 318,  
 See: MA iii p. 14, p. 201, v. p. 67, AA, v p. 85., ItvA, ii p. 06., CpA, p.  
 158., PtsmA ii p. 399, DhasA, p. 03, 241, VibhA, p. 09  
 25 DA ii p. 566, AA, iii p. 159. See also: Abeynayaka, p. 42  
 26 MA ii p. 286  
 27 MAT *Be* ii p. 210  
 28 M i p. 36  
 29 Vibh p. 368  
 30 MA i p. 169  
 31 S ii pp.144-4  
 32 SA ii p. 134  
 33 SAT *Be* ii p. 133.,as this *sutta* (i.e. S, ii pp. 144-4)  
 34 DA i p. 197, MA, i p. 264., SA, iii p. 193., VibhA, p. 358, SA, ii p. 276,VA,  
 iii p. 591.,VibhA, p. 387, DAT, *Be* ii p. 410  
 35 UdA p. 312, Sādp, *Be* iii p. 301., the meaning of *padapacchābhaṭṭha* is not  
 clear. Perhaps, it may denote skipping of the ending words or terms.  
*padapacchābhaṭṭhantipadaparāvatti* –Vimat, *Be* i p. 134  
 36 MA ii p. 252.,Sādp, *Be* iii p. 39  
 37 VA i p. 234  
 38 K. R. Norman also declares the keenness of pronunciation in Pāli oral  
 tradition- K. R. Norman, 1997 p. 49. see also: Gombrich, pp. 74-5., Wynne,  
 p. 99  
 39 sv: *vitthāyatito be embarrassed or confused ( lit. To become quite stiff), to*  
*be at a loss,to hesitate*-PED, p. 621  
 40 sv: see *araṇi wood for kindling by attrition*-PED, p. 76., sv: *araṇi the piece of*  
*wood used for kindling fire by attrition*- CDIAL, p. 26., *either of the two*  
*pieces of wood for making fire ( but generally = adharāraṇī)*- CPD, vol i p.  
 416., *one of the two pieces of wood (usually the lower ) used for kindling*  
*fire*- DOP p. 233  
 41 VA i p. 235  
 42 MA ii p. 253  
 43 Ibid. p. 253 *mātikāsv: water course*—PED, p. 528  
 44 Ibid. p. 254  
 45 Ibid. p. 253  
 46 Ibid. p. 252  
 47 sv: *vasā fat, tallow, grease* –PED, p. 605  
 48 MA ii p. 252

- 49 Ibid. p. 253  
 50 VA i p. 234  
 51 Ibid. iv p. 788  
 52 Ñānamoli, 2006, p. 56  
 53 PED, p. 501., SavtBe i p. 81, VA, iv pp. 788-90  
 54 UdA p. 312. The last word i.e. *uttāretuṃ* in this sentence differs in other versions. Eg: *ussāretuṃ*- UdA, *Be* p. 284 and *uccāretuṃ*- UdA, Hevavitarane edition (=Hv), 1990, Colombo, p. 208  
 55 Vism *Be* i p. 235  
 56 VibhA p. 225  
 57 KhpA) p. 4, Ñānamoli, 2005, *The Illustrator of Ultimate Meaning*, p. 41  
 58 D iii. P. 242., Tr. *contemplates it in mind*- DB, vol iii p. 230  
 59 VibhA 224  
 60 KhpA p. 41., VibhA p. 56  
 61 Ñānamoli, 2005 p. 41  
 62 A iii p. 30  
 63 *sv: nimittasign, omen, portent, prognostication*-PED, p. 367  
 64 *sv: adhiṭṭhahati* to stand on, to insist on, to concentrate or fix one's attention on, to direct one's thought to- PED p. 28., to tread upon, *enter (in to), abide, to stand upon, ascend*- CPD, vol i p. 133  
 65 AA iii p. 236  
 66 A iv p.85., once.. Venerable Mahāmogallāna sat nodding- Hare, 2006,p. 50  
 67 Hare, Op.cit, iv p. 51  
 68 Th p. 20., M ii p. 140  
 69 M i p. 213, p. 216., A i p. 103  
 70 MA ii p. 253.  
 71 DA i p. 177, MA ii p. 203, AA ii p. 289.,VA vii p. 1399., MP 344., Tr. Horner, 1999, pp. 194-4, SA ii p. 59, SA ii p. 68  
 72 VA vii p. 1399., *upalakkheti sv: to distinguish, discriminate* -PED, p.146., *looks at, observes, and pays attention to*- DOP, p. 469  
 73 DA i p. 177., MA, ii p. 203., AA, ii p. 289.,VA, vii p. 1399  
 74 Pv p. 55  
 75 *Sn* p. 34  
 76 Warder, 1967, pp 28-9  
 77 *SādpBe* iii p. 492, DOP, p. 644 *articulatory organ*, von Hinuber, 2005, p. 207). CPD comprehensively mentions it as *speech organ, e.g., tongue, palate, throat*- CPD ,vol. iii p. 284  
 78 Von Hinuber, Op.cit. p. 206  
 79 VA vii p. 1400  
 80 VA vii, p. 1400., see for comprehensive translation: Hinuber, Op. cit, pp. 198-232  
 81 Bhandarkar, 1942, vol ii p. 42  
 82 *SnA*, vol ii p. 398  
 83 *chandonidānaṃgāthānaṃ*- S, i. p. 38., *metre's the hidden source whence verses flow*- KS, p. 54., *metre is the scaffolding of verses*- Bodhi, 2000, p. 130., *prosody is the basis of verse*- U Tin U, 2004, *SagāthavaggaSamyutta*, p.102., See: SA, i. pp. 94-5.

- 84 SAT *Be* i p. 131
- 85 Geiger, 2004, p. 67. Turner shows the possibility of changing Sanskrit *vr̥tta* into *vatta* and *vaṭṭa* in Prakrit. See *CDIAL*, p. 699
- 86 *āyatakasv*: Hare, 2008, p. 184., *long-drawn plain-song sound*- Horner, 2001, p. 145., *āyatakasv*: *long, prolonged, long-drawn (of a tone)*- CPD, vol ii p. 127., *drawn out (of sound)*- DOP, p. 319
- 87 *VA* vi p. 1202
- 88 *V* ii, p.108., *VA*, vi p.1202. Horner translates *sarabhañña* as intoning. Monks, I allow intoning- Horner 2001, p.146, intoning, a particular mode of reciting- *PED*, p. 697., Abeynayaka 1984, p. 24
- 89 *Pātyo Be* p. 452
- 90 *VA* vi p. 1202
- 91 As Law recognizes *Jātakapāli* is consist only with of verses. Baruah also emulates Law's opinion. Law, 2000, p.273., Singh N. K. & B. Baruah, 2003, p. 227
- 92 Fausböll, 2008, pp. 412-56
- 93 Norman, 1983, p. 81
- 94 *VA* vi p. 1202
- 95 See *tarāṅgasv*-s: *across goer, a wave, billow, a section of a literally work that contain in its name. To move like a billow, wave about, move restlessly to and fro.* -SED, p. 438., *a wave*-PED, p. 298., *brook, current, stream of water*- CDIAL, p. 324
- 96 *tarāṅgabhedavatta*: this can only be seen in *Hv VA*, iv p. 88
- 97 This word is quite ambiguous. *dohaka*: a milk-pale [?]- PED, p. 332. But in other scripts it appears as *dhotaka*. The word *dhotaka* this word also quite cryptic :. However, *dodhaka* is “a form of metre (also *vr̥tta* )”-SED, p. 498) which is incorporated in *Triṣṭubh*metre. see also *Siddharatha*, 1981, *Vuttodaya: A Study of Pāli Metre*, p. 26., perhaps this is derived from *dhota+ ka* that can be interpreted as “*washed, bleached, clean*”- PED, p. 343
- 98 *Aṅguttaranikāya-aṭṭhakathā-ṭīkāBe* iii p. 78
- 99 *Pātyo, Be* p. 453
- 100 *VA* vi p. 1202
- 101 *VA* vi p. 1202
- 102 *Ibid.*
- 103 *Vimat Be* ii p. 228