

On the Vedic Prosody

The Vedic Meters are called Chandas. In RV there are few varieties of chandas: 5 syllables in pada (foot), which rare, 8, 11 and 12.

- 1) 5 syllables in a pada: $\underline{\cup} _ \underline{\cup} _ \underline{\cup}$, combined in the tetrameter build dvīpadā virāj (very rare meter):

paśvā na tāyum | guhā catantam |
namo yujāntam | namo vahantam ||

- 2) 8 syllables meter, usually iambic, consists of two feet:

$\underline{\cup} _ \underline{\cup} _ | \underline{\cup} _ \underline{\cup} _ |$ agnim īle purohitam |

- a) when combined in the trimeter gives Gāyatrī:
agnim īle purohitam |
yajñasya devam ṛtvijam |
hotāraṃ ratnadhātāmam ||
- b) when combined in four, tetrameter, then it builds anuṣṭubh (2 and 2 padas)
- c) when combined in five, pentameter, it gives pāṅkti (2 and 3 padas)
- d) when combined in six, hexameter, it gives mahāpāṅkti (2 and 4 padas);
- e) when combined in seven, heptameter, it gives śakvarī, (3 and 4 padas).

- 1) 11 syllables pada, combined in the tetrameter is called triṣṭubh. It is the first most used chandas in RV (2/5 hymns). It is of two kinds:

- a) $\underline{\cup} _ \underline{\cup} _ , \underline{\cup} \underline{\cup} | _ \underline{\cup} _ \underline{\cup} |$ yahvā iva pra vayām ujjihānāḥ
- b) $\underline{\cup} _ \underline{\cup} _ \underline{\cup} , \underline{\cup} \underline{\cup} | _ \underline{\cup} _ \underline{\cup} |$ abodhi hotā yajathāya devān

- 2) Jagatī is the third most used meter in the RV. It has four padas and twelve syllables in a pada which are of two different kinds:

- a) $\underline{\cup} _ \underline{\cup} _ , \underline{\cup} \underline{\cup} | _ \underline{\cup} _ \underline{\cup} \underline{\cup} |$ tuvām agne átithim pūrviyāṃ víśaḥ
- b) $\underline{\cup} _ \underline{\cup} _ \underline{\cup} , \underline{\cup} \underline{\cup} | _ \underline{\cup} _ \underline{\cup} \underline{\cup} |$ pratnām pratnāsa ūtāye sahaskr̥ta

The caesura is falling after the fourth or the fifth syllable and the cadenza is always of five syllables. It has mainly iambic, and in this sense it differs from triṣṭubh where in cadenza it mainly trochaic.

Sometimes the term dimeter is used for metrical schemes based on the 8-syllable (gāyatrī) pada, there being a two-fold division of a pada into **opening and cadence**; and the term trimeter for schemes based on 11-syllable (triṣṭubh) or 12-syllable (jagatī) padas, the division being into **opening, break and cadence**. The principal difference between the two forms of trimeter is in the rhythm of the cadence: generally trochaic

for triṣṭubh padas and iambic for jagatī padas. Except for one significant collection, gāyatrī padas are also generally iambic in the cadence.¹

There are other more extended meters which are only a combination of the 8 and 12 syllabic padas:

- 8 8, 12 - uṣṇih;
- 12 8, 8 - purauṣṇih;
- 8 12, 8 - kakubh;
- 8 8, 12 8 - bṛhatī;
- 12 8, 12 8 - satobṛhatī;
- 8 8 8, 8 8, 12 8 – atīśakvarī;
- 12 12 8, 8 8, 12 8 - atyaṣṭi;
- 8 8, 12 8, 12 8, 12 8 – bārhata pragātha (comb. of bṛhatī with satobṛhatī);
- 8 12 8, 12 8, 12 8 – kākubha-pragātha (comb. of kakubh with satobṛhatī).

Some examples:

Jagatī:

त्वाम् अ॒ग्न॒ ऋ॒ताय॑वः॒ सम् ई॒धिरे॑ प्र॒त्नम् प्र॒त्नास॑ ऊ॒तये॑ सह॒स्कृत॑ ।

पु॒रु॒श्चन्द्रं॑ य॒जतं॑ वि॒श्व॒धाय॑सं॒ दमू॑नसं॒ गृ॒ह॒पतिं॑ व॒रेण्य॑म् ॥ ५-००८-०१

tuvām agna | ṛtāyavaḥ sám īdhire | pratnām pratnāsa | ūtāye sahaskrta |
puruścandram | yajatam viśvadhāyaṣam | dāmūnaṣam | grhāpatiṁ vāreṇyam 5.008.01

त्वाम् अ॒ग्ने अ॒ति॒थिम् पू॒र्व्यं वि॒शः शो॑चि॒ष्के॑शं॒ गृ॒ह॒पतिं॑ नि॒ षेदि॑रे ।

बृ॒ह॒त्के॑तुम् पु॒रुरूपं॑ ध॒नस्पृ॑तं सु॒शार्मा॑णं स्व॒वसं॑ ज॒रद्वि॑षम् ॥ ५-००८-०२

tuvām agne | ātithim pūrvyāṁ viśaḥ \ śociṣkeśam | grhāpatiṁ nī ṣedire
brhātketum | pururūpaṁ dhanaspṛtaṁ \ suśarmāṇam | suāvaṣam jaradvīṣam
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Triṣṭubh:

अ॒बो॑ध्यु॒ अग्निः॑ स॒मि॒धा ज॑नानाम् प्र॒ति धे॑नुम् इ॒वाय॑तीम् उ॒षास॑म् ।

य॒ह्वा इ॒व प्र॒ व॒याम् उ॒ज्जि॑हानाः प्र॒ भान॑वः सि॒स्रते॑ ना॒कम् अ॒च्छ ॥ ५-००९-०१

¹ From Wikipediya.

अबोधि होता यजथाय देवान् ऊर्ध्वो अग्निः सुमनाः प्रातर् अस्थात् ।
समिद्धस्य रुशद् अदर्शि पाजो महान् देवस् तमसो निर् अमोचि ॥ ५-००१-०२

ábodhi agníḥ samídhā jánānām práti dhenúm ivāyatí m uṣāsam
yahvā iva prá vayām ujjiḥnāḥ prá bhānávaḥ sirate nākam ácha 5.001.01

ábodhi hótā yajáthāya devān ūrdhvó agníḥ sumánāḥ prātár asthāt
sámiddhasya rúśad adarśi pājo mahān devás támaso nír amoci 5.001.02

Gāyatrī:

सुसमिद्धाय शोचिषे घृतं तीव्रं जुहोतन । अग्नये जातवेदसे ॥ ५-००५-०१
नराशंसः सुषूदतीमं यज्ञम् अदाभ्यः । कविर् हि मधुहस्त्यः ॥ ५-००५-०२
ईळितो अग्न आ वहेन्द्रं चित्रम् इह प्रियम् । सुखै रथेभिर् ऊतये ॥ ५-००५-०३
ऊर्णम्रदा वि प्रथस्वाभ्य् अर्का अनूषत । भवा नः शुभ्र सातये ॥ ५-००५-०४
देवीर् द्वारो वि श्रयध्वं सुप्रायणा न ऊतये । प्रप्र यज्ञम् पृणीतन ॥ ५-००५-०५

Anuṣṭubh:

सखायः सं वः सम्यञ्चम् इषं स्तोमं चाग्नये ।
वर्षिष्ठाय क्षितीनाम् ऊर्जो नप्त्रे सहस्वते ॥ ५-००७-०१
कुत्रा चिद् यस्य समृतौ रणवा नरो नृषदने ।
अर्हन्तश् चिद् यम् इन्धते संजनयन्ति जन्तवः ॥ ५-००७-०२
सं यद् इषो वनामहे सं हव्या मानुषाणाम् ।
उत द्युम्नस्य शवस ऋतस्य रश्मिम् आ ददे ॥ ५-००७-०३

Pāñkti:

अग्निं तम् मन्ये यो वसुर् अस्तं यं यन्ति धेनवः ।

अस्तम् अर्वन्त आशवो ऽस्तं नित्यासो वाजिन इषं स्तोतृभ्य आ भर ॥ ५-००६-०१

सो अग्निर् यो वसुर् गृणे सं यम् आयन्ति धेनवः ।

सम् अर्वन्तो रघुद्रुवः सं सुजातासः सूर्य इषं स्तोतृभ्य आ भर ॥ ५-००६-०२

अग्निर् हि वाजिनं विशे ददाति विश्वचर्षणिः ।

अग्नी राये स्वाभुवं स प्रीतो याति वार्यम् इषं स्तोतृभ्य आ भर ॥ ५-००६-०३

On the Meters (general note).

Iambic/iamb: two syllables with the stress on the second syllable
example: *Whose woods these are I think I know.* (Iambic tetrameter)

Trochaic/trochee: two syllables with the stress on the first syllable
example: *Double, double toil and trouble,* (trochaic tetrameter)
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.

Anapestic/anapest: three syllables with the stress on the last syllable
example: *With the sheep in the fold and the cows in their stalls.* (Anapestic tetrameter)

Dactylic/dactyl: three syllables with the stress on the first syllable
example: *Love again, song again, nest again, young again.* (Dactylic tetrameter)

Numbers of Meter:

monometer: one foot line, - *Thus I* (trochaic monometer)

dimeter: two foot line, - *Workers earn it.* (Trochaic dimeter)

trimeter: three foot line, - *The idle life I lead.* (Iambic trimeter)

tetrameter: four foot line, - *Whose woods these are I think I know.*

pentameter: five foot line, - *Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May.* (Iambic pentameter)

hexameter: six, - *To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.* (Iambic hexameter)

heptameter: seven, - *It looked extremely rocky for the Mudville nine that day.* (Iambic heptameter)

octometer: eight, - *Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered weak and weary.* (Trochaic octometer)

Rhyme: identical repetition between two different words

-position: end rhyme, internal rhyme

-kinds of rhyme:

-masculine: one syllable rhymed words, blend/send

-feminine: a stressed the unstressed syllable, lawful/awful

-triple: three syllable rhymed word, quivering/shivering