## A Note on Syllable-Quantity in Sinhalese metre


Matek luhu guru vē - de mat digu hā pasu hal.
A light syllable is one mātrà. A heavy syllable, namely, a long vowel or a vowel and consonant, is two mātrās. ${ }^{1}$

This aphorism on syllable-quantity comes in the second verse of the Sañdäs Lakụ̣a (13th century A.D.), the earliest extant, but nonetheless current, treatise on Sinhalese metrics. This statement provides a twoterm system of quantity which may be stated as follows by generalizing the syllable in terms of C and $\mathrm{V}^{2}$ and using the macron to indicate vowel length:
$\left.\begin{array}{lll}\text { light (luhu) syllables : } & V, & C V \\ \text { heavy (guru) syllables: } & \bar{V}, & C \bar{V} \\ & V C, & C V C \\ & \overline{V C}, & C \bar{V} C\end{array}\right\}=$ one mātrā.

In this note I propose to make a few observations on this concept. ${ }^{3}$
The statement of luhu and guru syllables in Sinhalese is identical with the statement of laghu and guru in Sanskrit. In Sanskrit, a laghu syllable ( $\mathrm{V}, \mathrm{CV}$ ) is one mātrā and a guru syllable ( $\bar{\nabla}, \mathrm{C} \overline{\mathrm{V}}, \mathrm{VC}, \mathrm{CVC}, \overline{\mathrm{VC}}, \mathrm{C} \overline{\mathrm{V}} \mathrm{C}$ is two mātrās. ${ }^{4}$

So far as Sanskrit poetry ${ }^{5}$ is concerned, this system is applicable without any lapses. Where a laghu syllable is prescribed by metrics, one may have $V$ or $C V$. Where a guru syllable is prescribed, one may have $\bar{V}, C \bar{V}$,

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VC, CVC, $\bar{V} C$ or C $\bar{V} C$. In Sinhalese poctry, however, this is not applicable in the same way. For non-Sanskritic metres, I find it necessary to recognize a three-term system as follows:

| $V$, | $C V$ |
| :--- | :--- |
| $V C$, | $C V C$ mātrā. |
| $V=$ | $C V C$ |
| $\bar{V}$, | $C \bar{V}$ |
| $\overline{V C}$, | $C \bar{V} C$ |

Before stating the data for the recognition of a threc-term system of syllable quantity for Sinhalese, I propose to illustrate the adequacy of the two-term system of syllable quantity in Sanskrit by giving below a Sanskrit verse and gencralizing its syllables in terms of, $\mathrm{C}, \mathrm{V}$ and macron. The verse chosen is composed in the 'mandäkrāntā' metre which needs four lines of the following pattern :

There are 17 syllables in a line of which $10(1-4,10-11,13-14,16-17)$ are long. The verse chosen is :

(Meghadūtaù. 1,57).
The heavy syllables are underlined. Each line has ten heavy syllables and seven light syllables in the prescribed sequence. The syllable structures in these lines are given below in terms of $\mathrm{C} V$ and macron paying special attention to the heavy syllables.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| CO CVC CVC CVC CV CV CV CV CV CVC CVC CV CVC CV CV CVC CVC |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| CVC | CVC | CV | CVC CV CV CV CV CV |  |  |  | C $\bar{V}$ | CVC | CV | C $\overline{\bar{V}}$ | CVC | CV |  | CVC |
| CVC | CVC | CV |  |  |  |  | CVCVC | CVC | CV | C $\bar{V}$ | CVV | CV CV̈CCV CVC |  |  |
| $C \bar{V}$ | CV | CVC | CVC CVCVCV CV CV |  |  |  |  |  | CVC CV | $C \bar{V}$ | CVC |  |  |  |
| 6. Macron $(-)=$ guru (heavy) syllable. Micron $(-)=$ laghu (light) syllable. In the San̆das lakuna however, the prescribed notation is the opposite. It recommends that heavy syllables must be marked with the micron and light syllables with the macron. <br> 'guru vak kotin aňdanē-luhu idu an̆du än̆damē' <br>  <br> 7. In Sk, e and o are long vowels. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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These syllable structures show that where a heavy syllable is prescribed, any of the three, $\mathrm{CV}, \mathrm{CVC}$ and $\mathrm{C} \overline{\mathrm{V}}$ ( (or, for that matter, $\mathrm{V}, \mathrm{VC}$ and $\overline{\mathrm{V}} \mathrm{C}$ ) can occur without any restriction. The light syllables are CV (or, for that matter, V) in structure.

The concept of luhu and guru syllables in Sinhalese is a borrowing from Sanskrit, and can be applied in the Sanskritic metres in Sinhalese in the same way as in Sanskrit. This two-term system is, however, insufficicnt to analyse the non-Sanskritic metres. For them it is necessary that a threc-term system of mātrā structurc should be recognized, as :

| $\mathrm{V}, \mathrm{CV}$ | $:$one mātrā. <br> $\overline{\mathrm{V}}, \mathrm{C} \bar{V}, \mathrm{VC}, \mathrm{CVC}$ | two mātrās. |
| :--- | :--- | :--- |
| $\overline{\mathrm{V} C}, \mathrm{C} \overline{\mathrm{V}} \mathrm{C}$ | $:$ | three mātrā̆s. |

In order to illustrate this point I give below four first lines of certain four-line verses ${ }^{8}$ of the mätrā pattern $9-11-9-14{ }^{9}$. These lines, then must contain 9 mātrās each ${ }^{10}$

| (1) |  | dam̌badiv tala patara |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| (2) |  | etuvak sita duhad |
| (3) | - We్e m | yêsus kiristü |
|  | ఆผลEిక musios | sebaliñdu kāngara |

To scan them :

| (1) $-\smile ー \smile \smile \smile \smile こ ~$ | $=9$ |
| :--- | :--- |
| (2) | $=9$ |
| (3) |  |
| (4) | $=9$ |
|  | $=9$ |

The structures of syllables denoted by - are as follows :

| $(1)-$ | $=\mathrm{CVC}$ |
| :--- | :--- |
| $(2)-$ | $=\mathrm{CVC}$ |
| $(3)-\cdots-$ | $=\mathrm{CV}, \mathrm{CVC}, \mathrm{CVC}, \mathrm{CV}$ respectively. |
| $(4)-$ | $=\mathrm{CVC}$. |

[^1] crial so long as the number of mātrās is correctly preserved. This particular metre is
10 . See Kustantimu hatana, ed. S. G. Perera and M. E. Fernando. 1933 pp .42 ff .

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In counting the mātrā structure by alletting one mātrā to cach light (一) syllable we find that-
in (1) the light syllables count 7 , and therefore $C V C=2$.
in (2) the light syllables count 7 , and therefore $\mathrm{CVC}=2$.
in (3) the light syllable counts 1 , the two CVC syllables count, as shown in (1) and (2), 4 ; therefere the twe CV syllables $=4$, whence $\mathrm{CV}=2$, in (4) the light syllables count 6 , and therefore $C \bar{V} C=3$.

This observation indicates that a threc-term system of mātrā structure should be recognized for non-Sanskritic metres in Sinhalese as-
(C) V
$=1$ mātrā.
(C) $\bar{\nabla}$, (C) VC
$=2$ mātrās.
(C) $\overline{\mathrm{V}} \mathrm{C}$
$=3$ mātrās.

On this basis a three-term system of syllable quantity may be set up for analysing Sinhalese as light, medium and heavy, whereby the phonetic distinction of length between such pairs as pan, pān ; gat, găt ; mas, mäs : etc., can be phonologically stated in terms of the category of quantity.
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[^0]:    1. The mention of only the vowel and the final consonant shows that the initial consonant, if any, is immaterial for the mātrā structure of the syllable.
    2. $\mathrm{C}=$ consonant $; \quad \mathrm{V}=$ vowel.
    3. Quantity, which is a two-term system, is different from length. Length is said to be a threeterm system, harasva (short), dirgha (long) and pluta (extra long). But pluta, they say, cannot be written. It is only the prolongation of a vocalic sound.
    4. See also W. S. Allen, Phonetics in Ancient India, pp. 83 ff .
    5. See A. A. Macdonell, a Sanskrit Grammar for Students, pp. 234-5.
[^1]:    8. Kustantimu hatana, vv 9-12.
    9. In many Sinhalese metres the number of syllables in a line is not prescribed by the metric rules; only the number of mâtrās in a line is prescribed. Therefore, the number of syllables is immat
