

***Saṅkhepasārasaṅgaha*: Abbreviation in Pāli**

*ratattayaṃ vanditvāna dhīrassa bahussutassa
yassa saṃvaṇṇanāyāyaṃ saṅgaho'mhehi racito*

*yena bahulikhitena raññā uttaranarena
lekhātidīghamattāya ninditā 'smi pubbakāle*

*tassa dīghāyulekhanam nandanī payacchāmimam
māgadhisāṅkhepanassa atisaṅkhittavaṇṇanam*

In celebrating the longevity and prolific contribution of our cause, I seek to atone with the following brief synopsis of abridgement for former length deemed by him excessive.

Reducing or replacing repetition that contains little or no variation when recording texts in written form, skipping the chorus with a scribal ditto for an aural fullness, is achieved through the term *peyyāla* “formula, repetition” (*PED* s.v. and Norman 2006, pp. 113–14) reduced further to *pa*, *pe*, *pe ... la*.¹ Cf. Sanskrit *peyyālam* (e.g.

¹The characteristic repetition of some Pāli literature is usually identified as an aid to the oral memory of a text, even though it does not assist memory of the non-repetition (summary of theories to date: Allon, pp. 354–57, his own 398). An alternative avenue of exploration would be to consider the performance function, drawing on textual anthropology: The lead/expert monk(s) recite the whole, resting their voice while the larger “chorus” pick up the refrains. This would tie in with the observations made by Norman in his discussion of “Buddhism and Oral Tradition” on the basis of anthropology by Tambiah who in turn describes how the common and repeated formulae are those remembered by most monks (Norman 2006, pp. 62–63). Current theories and observation of the performance of Pāli literature leave me with questions: To what extent has performance shaped the form of the text? To what extent are the Dīgha-nikāya texts more repetitive because important ceremonially? Is the performance function sometimes a factor in the difference between shorter and longer versions of the same text? For example, is a Mahāsātipaṭṭhānasutta used for a grander funeral? Does the repetition really give the audience “an opportunity to grasp” the content (Allon, p. 362) when the repetition is not of the essence, or should we consider that at the time of its taking on that format the text in Pāli was, as today, already understood primarily as powerful sound

Samādhirājasūtra) or alternatives such as *pūrvavad yāvat* (e.g. *Divyāvadāna*).² In a Dīgha-nikāya text *peyyāla* might replace thirty per cent of unabridged content (Allon, pp. 275ff.), in Abhidhamma even more.

Omission even in cases of variation is possible, where a sample gives an impression of the whole, e.g. progressive intermittent numbers, one verb where grammar requires more (Allon, pp. 354–57). A compound conveys beyond itself, relationships unexpressed, linguistic traces of an original context sometimes not fully erased: the *samāsa*, plain, *aluk*, or syntactical (Norman 1991). Contractions, sometimes contortions, also comprise external *sandhi* (Norman 1993).

Yāva(t) (i)ti ādi, etc., denote lists, whether numeric, specific, or generic, giving only one or a few items.

Na-mo bu-ddhā-ya and *a-ra-haṃ* are examples of the *parikamma* “aids” to practice in pre-reform Theravada, the microcosmic–macrocosmic identification that encapsulates the great within the tiny: five-syllabled *namo bu-ddhā-ya* representing pentads such as *khandha*, Buddhas; trisyllabic *arahaṃ* representing triads – gems, robes, breaths, *Piṭaka* (Crosby 2000, p. 147). They protect aurally or visually, perhaps as a blue tattoo (Bizot 1981). Similarly, the full funerary works can be performed on a budget: extracts of the seven Abhidhamma books precede Praḥ Maleyya. Parallels are found in Sanskrit and Tibetan Buddhism, where the budgetary and temporal restrictions on acquisition of merit result in first-page recitation or simultaneity of all.

Overviews offer condensed coverage, comprehensive accessibility, and decoctions of the essence. Title words: *-saṅkhepa*, *-saṅgaha*, *-samāsa*, *-sāra*, e.g. *Saccasaṅkhepa*, *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*, *Nāma-rūpasamāsa*, *Sārasaṅgaha* (von Hinüber 1996, Chapters VI, VIII). The earliest is the *Suttasaṅgaha* (Norman 1983, pp. 172–73). Cognate adverbs express authorial intent: *saṅkhittena saṅkhepena* the opposite

rather than through the verbatim meaning of its specific content?

²My thanks to Andrew Skilton for these references to Sanskrit literature and to the *avadāna* below.

of *vistarena*. These can also refer to a familiar tale. Cf. Gāndhārī *avadāna* and *pūrvayoga*: “The whole [story] is to be done [i.e. recited] in full ... *vistare janidave siyadī ... sarva vistare yaṣayupamano siyadī*” (Salomon 1999, pp. 36, 38–39).

Ritual and regulatory reminders are generated by prompts that provide the beginning but not the end, e.g. *namo tassa* for *namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*. Key words are used in the elaborate abbreviation of *yogāvacara* manuals such as the Amataḅkara-vaṅṅanaḅ to encapsulate an array of ritual and meditation instructions in a single verse, fuller formulae to be drawn down from instruction given earlier or elsewhere (Crosby 2005). The result was not recognised as a list of keywords from sentences otherwise unrepresented and was emended as if a set of single sentences with faulty grammar by Ratanajoti and Ratanapali (1963), who then — not recognising the import — in turn abridged the text further from 3818 to 1135 verses (thus not as recorded Norman 1994, reprint, p. 268). A similar “drawing down” familiar from Pāṅini along with the code letters triggering treatment used therein is found in the Pali adaptations of the same, such as the Kaccāyana-vyākaranaḅ (Norman 1983, pp. 163–67).³

Mātikā are very productive as tables of content, key words to summarize the whole, the mother who generates the teachings. Multiple functions have been illuminated by Gethin: mnemonic (149), point of access to whole (155), guide to structure (155), to composition (156), to mindfulness (165), and adeptly summarised by Allon (7). In South-East Asia the “mother” also generates the ritual foetus (McDaniel 5), the embryonic Buddha within (Crosby 2000).

Acronyms and acrostics encompass secret and powerful encapsulations, such as the first syllables that form the “hearts” *hadaya* (Pent). Compare *dhāraṅi* such as the *arapacana* (Braarvig). Some are not so secret: in South-East Asia the first letter of the seven Abhidhamma texts (Swearer 1995A); in Thailand, the first syllables of each of the

³I have only seen manuscript versions. Norman (1983, p. 163) cites the printed edition by E. Senart, *Journal Asiatique* 1871, pp. 193–544.

bodhisattas in the final ten Jātakas (Shaw xxxiii).⁴

Numinous powers of the Buddha are harnessed through the poetic synopses of biographic episodes to empower a statue (Swearer 1995B), to heal or bring peace, or just to entertain (Somadasa: vii with examples from the Nevill collection throughout).

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⁴My thanks to Naomi Appleton for this reference.

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