

**Basics of Veda Swaras
and Vedic Recital-05**

Chandas

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1 Veda Basics – Chandas

1.1 Introduction:

“ChandaH” (छन्दः) refers to how the poetry or verse is constructed in

terms of certain well defined rules. The English reference word is ‘meter’.

A Chandas (**Chanda:**) has a rule of how many aksharas or there in a Chandas and how it is distributed into distinct parts /legs/Paadams.

A person conversant with Tamil Grammar would know the specific area of “Yappilakkanam’ (the grammar of poetry). This kind of metering a poetry verse is common in all languages which we have normally come across in India.

Chandas represents a similar grammatical construction of poetry in Sanskrit.

Chandas is one of the six main parts (angas) of Veda.

There are a number of Chandas used in poetry and Vedas.

1.2 The Main Seven Chandas:

The Main Seven Chandas used in Sanskrit Poetry/Vedas are:

1. **Gayatri**: This Chandas has 24 Letters/Aksharas in each stanza/mantra divided into 3 Paadas (parts/legs) of 8 Letters/Aksharas each.
2. **Ushnik** : This Chandas has 28 Letters/Aksharas in each stanza/mantra divided into 4 Paadas of 7 Letters/Aksharas each.

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3. **Anustup:** This Chandas has 32 Letters/Aksharas in each stanza/ mantra divided into 4 Paadas of 8 Letters/Aksharas each. Most of the Slokas in typical classical Sanskrit uses this Chandas, most often recited being Vishnu Sahasranamam and Lalitha Sahasranamam.
 4. **Brihati :** This Chandas has 36 Letters/Aksharas in each stanzas or mantra divided into four 4 Paadas (8 + 8 + 12 + 8) Letters/Aksharas.
 5. **Pangkti :** This Chandas has 40 Letters/Aksharas in each stanza divided into 4 Paadas of 10 Letters each (sometimes 5 Padas of 8 letters each)
 6. **Tristup:** This Chandas has 44 Letters/Aksharas in each stanza divided into 4 Paadas of 11 Letters/Aksharas each.
 7. **Jagati:** This Chandas has 48 Letters/Aksharas in each stanza divided into 4 Paadas of 12 Letters/Aksharas each.

Each of these Chandas has specific rules for how the akshara/letter patterns are formed. We limit our discussions to basic understanding of Gayatri and Anushtup Chandas only as these are often used. As our team studies more about other Chandas and right examples are found in the common area/subjects of Vedic recital in Krishna Yajur Veda, a discussion note will be prepared for the mutual benefit of Veda learners.

Please there are a number of Chandas other than these main seven. A Rishi could have also propounded a mantra with a nicCrut (modified/defective) chandras. Viz. nicCrut Gayatri ChandaH.. as in Ganapathi AtharvaSr.,Sham. We have restricted this note to what basics have been understood by us.

1.2.1 PraNava Nyasa Reference:

During Sandhya vandanam, we pray/remember/thank main seven Chandas during PraNavanyasa as follows:

प्रणवन्यासः

प्रणवस्य ऋषिर्. ब्रह्मा, देवी गायत्रिच्छन्दः , परमात्मा देवता ॥

भूरादि सप्त व्याहतीनाम् - अत्रि- भृगु-कुत्स-वसिष्ठ-गौतम- काश्यप-
अङ्गिरस ऋषयः ॥

गायत्री-उष्णिक्-अनुष्टुप्- बृहती- पङ्क्ति- तृष्टुप्- जगत्यश्-छन्दाम्पि ॥

अग्नि-वायु-अर्क-वागीस- वरुण- इन्द्र- विश्वे देवा- देवता ॥

1.2.2

ப்ரணவந்யாஸ:

ப்ரணவஸ்ய ருஷிர் ப்₃ரஹ்மா, தே₃வீ கா₃யாத்ரிச்ச்₂ந்த:,

பரமாத்மா தே₃வதா ॥

பு₄ராதி₃ ஸப்த வ்யாஹ்ருதீனாம் - அத்ரி - ப்₄ருகு- குத்ஸ-

வஸிஷ்ட - கௌ₃தம- காஸ்யப - அங்கிரஸ ருஷய: ॥

கா₃யாத்ரீ - உஷ்ணிக் - அனுஷ்டுப் - ப்₄ருஹதீ - பங்க்தீ -

த்ருஷ்டுப்- ஜகத்யஸ் - சந்தாம்ஸி ॥

அக்ஷனி - வாயு - அர்க்க - வாகீஸ - வருண - இந்த்ர- விஸ்வே
தேவா- தேவதா ||

ப്രണവന്യസഃ

ப്രணவன்ய ஜ்ஷிர் ஸ்ரஹா, தேவீ ஸாயத்ரிஹ்ந: ,
பரமாஹா தேவதா ||

பூராதி ஸ்ப்ர வ்யாஹுதீநாம் - ஸத்ரி- பூஹு-கூஸ-வஸிஷ்ட-
ஸாதம- காஸ்யப-ஸந்ஸிரஸ ஜ்ஷய: ||

ஸாயத்ரி-ஹ்ஷிக்-ஸநுஷ்டுப்-ஸ்யஹதீ- பக்தீ- துஷ்டுப்-
ஜஹத்யஸ-ஹநாஹி ||

ஸஹி-வாயு-ஸர்க்க-வாஹீஸ- வருண- ஹ்ந- விஸே
தேவா- தேவதா ||

The main principle that we touch our head indicating remember/thank the rishi who gave the mantra, touch the area above the mouth to remember that the chandas be in your mouth(meaning proper recital) and touch the heart, the Devata(s) who is/are worshipped be always in your heart. Nyasam is the practice to concentrate your brain & heart and bring in the spiritual forces you are worshipping into your Self.

Reader may also note that in the Eleventh Chapter of Chamakam reference to “gift of verse “is made from “**Chaturvigmsatischa me to Ashtachatvaarigmscha me**” indicating these seven Chandas.
(24,28,32,36,40,44,48)

2 Gayatri Chandas

2.1 Introduction

Gayatri Chandas has been very often used in composing Gayatris for various Devathas. The Chandas seems to get its name from the Gayatri Mantra which follows Gayatri Chandas. The normal Gayatri Chandas in its original form has 24 letters of 3 Paadams of 8 letters each.

The normal recital shall be made as 2+1 Paadams and many books mark the separator accordingly. Some schools insist on recital by each Paadam.

That is each Ruk consists of eight letters and there must be distinct pause between Paadams.

There are many variants of Gayatri Chandas. They are generally referred to as NicCrut Gayatri Chandas. The meaning of the word "NicCrut" stands for untie or loosen. Some term this as defective also taking dictionary meaning.

But scholars interpret it as **modified** Gayatris. Letters may vary from the standard Gayatri Chandas, example 22 letters, 25 letters and 26 letters. Then the method of recital is also defined by the Composing Rishi/Saint/Poet.

First we shall see some examples of Gayatri Chandas.

2.2 Examples from Known Areas

2.2.1 Examples of Gayatri Mantra

ओं त थ्स॑ वि॒ तु-र्व॑ रे॑ ष्यं॑ । (Paadam 1)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

भ॑ गाँ॑ दे॒ व॒ स्य॑ धी॒ म॒ हि॑ । (Paadam 2)

धि॒ यो॒ यो॑ नः॑ प्र॒ चो॒ द॒ यात्॑ ॥ (Paadam 3)

ஓம் தத்₂ஸ₁வி₂துர் வரே₁ண்யம் ।

ப₄ர்கோ₃ தே₃வஸ்ய₁ தீ₄மஹி தி₄யோ₁ யோன: ப்ரசோ₁த₃யாத் ॥

ஓம் த த்₂ஸ₁ வி₂ துர் வ ரே₁ ண்யம் । (Paadam 1)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

ப₄ ர்கோ₃ தே₃ வ ஸ்ய₁ தீ₄ ம ஹி । (Paadam 2)

தி₄ யோ₁ யோ₁ ன: ப்ரர சோ₁ த₃ யாத் ॥ (Paadam 3)

ஓ० த ம்ஸ் வி துர் வ ரே ன்ய० | (Paadam 1)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

ஓ ரீஸோ ஓ வ ஸ்ய யீ ம ஹி | (Paadam 2)

யி யோ யோ னஃ ப்ர ஷோ ஓ யாத் || (Paadam 3)

2.2.2 Examples of Gayatrees of Other Devata

त तु रु षा य वि द्य हे - व क्र तु षडा य धी म हि ।

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

त न्नो द न्तिः प्र चो द यात् ॥

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

தத்புருஷாய வித்₃மஹே வக்ரதுண்டாய₃ தீ₄மஹி |

தந்நோ த₃ந்தி: ப்ரசோத₃யாத்

த த்பு ரு ஷா ய வி த்₃ம ஹே

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

வ க்ர து ண்டாய₃ ய தீ₄ ம ஹி |

த ந்நோ த₃ ந்தி: ப்ர சோ த₃ யாத் ॥

त त्वु रू षा य वि र्म ह्ये

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

வக்ர து ண்டாய₃ ய யீ ம ஹி |

த ந்நோ ஓ னி: ப்ர ஷோ ஓ யாத் ||

तत्पुरुषाय विद्महे महादेवाय धीमहि । तन्नो रुद्रः प्रचोदयात् ॥

नारायणाय विद्महे वासुदेवाय धीमहि । तन्नो विष्णुः प्रचोदयात् ॥

தத்புருஷாய வித்₃மஹே மஹாதே₃வாய தீ₄மஹி ।
தந்நோ ருத்₃ர: ப்ரசோத₃யாத் ॥

நாராயணாய வித்₃மஹே வாஸுதே₃வாய தீ₄மஹி ।
தந்நோ விஷ்ணு: ப்ரசோத₃யாத் ॥

തത്പുരുഷായ വിദ്മഹേ മഹാദേവായ ധീമഹി ।
തന്നോ രുദ്രഃ പ്രചോദയാത് ॥

നാരായണായ വിദ്മഹേ വാസുദേവായ ധീമഹി ।
തന്നോ വിഷ്ണുഃ പ്രചോദയാത് ॥

Now please check the other two Gayatris of Rudra and Vishnu.
They follow the same form and pattern. Many a times the swaram acquisition shall be very similar.

2.3 Examples of Other Gayatris

व ज्र न खा य वि द्म हे ती क्षण-द७ ष्टा य धी म हि ।
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16
त न्नो ना र सि७ हः प्र चो द यात् ॥
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Note: Total letters 26 ; third paadam has 10 to accomodate the name of the Devata.

வ₁ஜ்₂ர₃ந₄கா₂ய₁ வி₃த்₃ம₁ஹே₁ தீ₃க்ஷ₃ண-த₃ய₃ஷ்ட₃ர்₃ய₁ தீ₄ம₁ஹி |
 த₁ந்₁நோ₁ நா₁ர₁ஸி₁ஹ்₁: ப்₁ர₁சோ₁த₃ய₁ாத் ||

வ₁ ஜ்₂ ர₃ ந₄ கா₂ ய₁ வி₃ த்₃ம₁ ஹே₁
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

தீ₃ க்ஷ₃ண₃ த₃ய₃ஷ்ட₃ர்₃ ய₁ தீ₄ ம₁ ஹி |
 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

த₁ ந்₁நோ₁ நா₁ ர₁ ஸி₁ஹ்₁: ப்₁ர₁ சோ₁ த₃ ய₁ாத் ||
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Note: Total letters 26 ; third paadam has 10 to accomodate the name of the DevatA.

வ₁ ஜ்₂ ர₃ ந₄ கா₂ ய₁ வி₃ த்₃ம₁ ஹே₁
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

தீ₃ க்ஷ₃ண₃ த₃ய₃ஷ்ட₃ர்₃ ய₁ தீ₄ ம₁ ஹி |
 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

த₁ ந்₁நோ₁ நா₁ ர₁ ஸி₁ஹ்₁: ப்₁ர₁ சோ₁ த₃ ய₁ாத் ||
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Note: Total letters 26 ; third paadam has 10 to accomodate the

name of the DevatA.

भा स्क् रा य वि ब्र हे म ह द्यु ति क रा य धी म हि ।
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17

त न्नो आ दित्यः प्र चो द यात् ॥
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Note: Total letters 26 ; First and Second paadams together has 17 letters (instead of 16) and the third paadam has one more letter. (9 instead of 8)

பா₄ஸ்க₂ராய₃ வி₃த்₃ம₃ஹே₁ ம₃ஹ₃த்₃த்₃யு₃தி₃க₃ராய₃ தீ₄ம₃ஹி₁ ।

த₁ந்₁நோ₁ ஆ₃தி₃த்₃ய₃: ப்₃ர₃சோ₃த்₃யா₃த்₃ ॥

பா₄ ஸ்க₂ ரா ய வி த்₃ம ஹே₁
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

ம ஹ த்₃த்₃யு₃ தி க ரா ய தீ₄ ம ஹி ।

8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17

த ந்₁நோ₁ ஆ தி₃ த்₃ய₃: ப்₃ர சோ₃ த்₃ யா₃த்₃ ॥
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Note: Total letters 26 ; First and Second paadams together has 17 letters (instead of 16) and the third paadam has one more letter. (9 instead of 8)

ॐ सु रो य वि ङ्ग वे
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

മ	ഹ	ദൃ	തി	ക	രാ	യ ¹	ധീ	മ	ഹി ।
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

ത	നോ ¹	ആ	ദി	ത്യഃ	പ്ര	ചോ	ദ	യാത് ¹¹
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Note: Total letters 26 ; First and Second paadams together has 17 letters (instead of 16) and the third paadam has one more letter. (9 instead of 8)

It is important to note that Veda mantras are more like poetry and the defined rules of grammar may not be always followed. Vedas are said to be older than the times scholars see the definition/emergence of modern Sanskrit grammar and related rules.

The Gayatris with different aksharas other than 24 letters have different names. The rishi who composed the mantra has a definite way to express the meaning. Then they also teach their students as to how the verse shall be recited.

In modern times, we see many variants of Gayatri for various types of Deities, Sidda Purushas and also Gurus. The level of acceptance is different amongst Vedic Schools.

3 Anushtup Chandas

3.1 Examples from known areas

3.1.1 Vishnusahasranamam

विष्णु सहस्रनाम स्तोत्र - श्लोक १

वि श्वम् वि ष्णुर्-व ष ट्का रो (Paadam 1)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

भू त भ व्य भ व त्प्र पुः । (Paadam 2) the Ruk Ends.

भू त कृत् भू त भृ द्वा वो (Paadam 3)

भू ता त्मा भू त भा व नः ॥ (Paadam 4)

After 32 letters, end of the Chandas is indicated by ||

விஷ்ணு ஸஹஸ்ரநாம ஸ்தோத்ரம் - ஸ்லோகம் 1

வி ஸ்வம் வி ஷ்ணுர் - வ ஷ ட்கா ரோ

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 (Paadam 1)

பூ₄ த ப₄ வ்ய ப₄ வ த்ப்ர பு: | (Paadam 2)

பூ₄ த க்ருத் பூ₄ த ப்₃ருத்₃ பா₄ வோ (Paadam 3)

பூ₄ தா த்மா பூ₄ த பா₄ வ ந: || (Paadam 4)

After 32 letters, end of the Chandas is indicated by ||

വിഷ്ണു സഹസ്രനാമ സ്തോത്രം - ശ്ലോക 1

വി ശ്യാം വി ഷ്ണുർ - വ ഷ ട്കാ രോ (Paadam 1)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

ഭൂ ത ഭ വ്യ ഭ വ ത്വപുഃ । (Paadam 2)

ഭൂ ത കൃത് ഭൂ ത ഭൃദ് ഭാ വോ (Paadam 3)

ഭൂ താ ത്താ ഭൂ ത ഭാ വ നഃ ॥ (Paadam 4)

After 32 letters, end of the Chandas is indicated by ॥

3.1.2 Lalita Sahasranamam

ललिता सहस्रनाम स्तोत्र - श्लोक ११८

आ त्म वि द्या म हा वि द्या (Paadam 1)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

श्री वि द्या का म से वि ता । (Paadam 2)

श्री षो ड शा क्ष री वि द्या (Paadam 3)

त्रि खू टा का म को टि का ॥ (Paadam 4)

After 32 letters, end of the Chandas is indicated by ॥

லலிதா ஸஹஸ்ரநாம ஸ்தோத்ரம் - பல்லோகம் 118

ஆ த்ம வி த்யா ம ஹா வி த்யா (Paadam 1)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

ஸ்ரீ வி த்யா கா ம ஸே வி தா | (Paadam 2)

ஸ்ரீ ஷோ ட₃ ஸா கூட ரீ வி த்யா (Paadam 3)

த்ரி கூ₂ டா கா ம கோ டி கா || (Paadam 4)

After 32 letters, end of the Chandas is indicated by ||

பலிதா ஸஹஸ்ரநாம ஸ்தோத்ரம் - ஷோகம் 118

ஸா ஹ வி ட்யா ம ஹா வி ட்யா (Paadam 1)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

ஸ்ரீ வி ட்யா கா ம ஸே வி தா | (Paadam 2)

ஸ்ரீ ஷோ ட₃ ஸா கூட ரீ வி ட்யா (Paadam 3)

ஸ்ரீ ஷா ட₃ கா ம கோ டி கா || (Paadam 4)

After 32 letters, end of the Chandas is indicated by ||

3.1.3 Rudram

न॑ म॑ स्ते॑ रु॒द्र॑ म॒न्य॑ व॒ (P1) उ॒ तो॑ त॒ इ॒ ष॑ वे॒ न॑ मः॑ । (P2)
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 न॑ म॑ स्ते॑ अ॒स्तु॑ ध॒न्व॑ ने॒ (P3) बा॒ हु॒भ्या॑ मु॒ त॒ ते॒ न॑ मः॑ ॥ (P4)

நமஸ்தே ருத்₃ர மன்யவ உதோத இஷவே நம: ।

நமஸ்தே அஸ்து த₄ன்வனே பா₃ஹுப்₄யாமுத தே நம:

ந ம ஸ்தே ரு த்₃ர ம ன்ய வ (P1)

உ தோ த இ ஷ வே ந ம: । (P2)

ந ம ஸ்தே அ ஸ்து த₄ ன்வ னே (P3)

பா₃ ஹு ப்₄யா மு த தே ந ம: ॥ (P4)

न॑ म॑ स्ते॑ रु॒द्र॑ म॒न्य॑ व॒ (P1)

उ॒ तो॑ त॒ इ॒ ष॑ वे॒ न॑ मः॑ । (P2)

न॑ म॑ स्ते॑ अ॒स्तु॑ ध॒न्व॑ ने॒ (P3)

बा॒ हु॒भ्या॑ मु॒ त॒ ते॒ न॑ मः॑ ॥ (P4)

Note: P1, P2, P3, P4 indicate the number of the Paadam.

3.1.4 Purusha Suktam

स॒ ह॒ स्र॑ शी॒ र्षा॑ पु॒रु॒ षः॑ । (P1) स॒ ह॒ स्रा॒ क्षः॑ स॒ ह॒ स्र॑ पात् । (P2)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

स॒ भू॒ मिं॑ वि॒ श्व॒ तो॑ वृ॒ त्वा । (P3) अ॒ त्य॒ ति॒ ष॒-द॒ शा॒ ङ्गु॒ लं । (P4)

ஸ॒ஹ॒ஸ்ர॑ஸ்ரீ॒ஷா॒ பு॒ரு॒ஷ:॑ | ஸ॒ஹ॒ஸ்ரா॒க்ஷ॑ஸ் ஸ॒ஹ॒ஸ்ர॑பாத் |

ஸ பூ॒மிம்॑ வி॒ஸ்வ॒தோ॑ வ்ரு॒த்வா | அ॒த்ய॑தி॒ஷ்ட₂॒த்₃-த₃॒ஸா॑ங்ரு₃லம் ||

ஸ॒ ஹ॒ ஸ்ர॑ ஸீ॒ ர்.ஷா॒ பு॒ ரு॒ ஷ:॑ || (P1)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

ஸ॒ ஹ॒ ஸ்ரா॒க்ஷ॑ ஸ்ஸ॒ ஹ॒ ஸ்ர॑ பாத் | (P2)

ஸ பூ॒மிம்॑ வி॒ ஸ்வ॒ தோ॑ வ்ரு॒ த்வா | (P3)

அ த்ய॑ தி॒ ஷ்ட₂॒ த்₃-த₃॒ ஸா॑ ங்ரு₃ லம் || (P4)

स॒ ह॒ स्‍ स्र॑ शी॒ र्षा॑ पु॒ रू॒ षः॑ । (P1)

स॒ ह॒ स्‍ स्रा॒ क्षः॑ स॒ ह॒ स्‍ स्र॑ पात् । (P2)

स॒ भू॒ मिं॑ वि॒ श्व॒ तो॑ वृ॒ त्वा । (P3)

अ॒ त्य॒ ति॒ ष॒-द॒ शा॒ ङ्गु॒ लं । (P4)

3.1.5 Recital of Anushtup Chandas:

The Veda Gurus/Scholars recommend that the rule to recite the Anushtup Chandas is to evenly recite the four parts of the Chandas clearly with a pause between one Paadam and the following Paadam. A longer pause is given after the second and third Padam where a Ruk Stop (|) appears.

It should not be long to create a break.

3.2 Observations

1. When we get into the Second Anuvaham of Rudram, starting with Namō HiranyabAgāVe, each of the lines do not form a specific Chandas; it seems the total recital of one Anuvaaham or a set of Anuvaaham completes the Chandas from various Rishis combined together.
2. Similarly, in Purusha Suktam , the flow of the mantra starting with the para “VedAhamEdam Purusham mahAntam” changes in terms of the number of Aksharas per Padam.

Some expert level books and compilers give the Rishi, Chandas and DevatA in their books indicating the Padams upto which that mantra starts and ends. We observed that the Taittirīya Samhita mantra verses are full of many mantras of various Rishis enjoined together at respective places to complete the hymn on one DevatA with referene to the book compiled by Shri Manohar Satwalekar, where such Rishi, Chandas, DevatA reference is given.