A Study of the Structure of Pāli Language

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Abstract

Pāli is the language of the Buddhist Canon. Structure of Pāli language has four parts of speech. They are Noun ($N\bar{a}ma$), Verb ($\bar{A}khy\bar{a}ta$), Prefix ($Upas\bar{a}ra$) and Particle ($Nip\bar{a}ta$). Pāli is an inflectional language. The inflections are declensions of the nouns and the conjugation of the verbs. Declension is the inflection of a nominal stem by means of ending which indicate the gender, number and case.

Key words: Nāma, Ākhyāta, Upasāra, Nipāta, Inflections, Declension.

Introduction

Pāļi is the language of the Buddhist Canon. Structure of Pāļi language has Four Parts of Speech. They are Noun ($N\bar{a}ma$), Verb ($\bar{A}khy\bar{a}ta$), Prefix ($Upas\bar{a}ra$) and Particles ($Nip\bar{a}ta$). Pāļi is an inflectional language. The inflections are declensions of the nouns and the conjugation of the verbs. Declension is the inflection of a nominal stem by means of endings which indicate the gender, number and case. Prefix in Pāļi are affixed to both nouns and verbs. Particles are used to understand the construction of sentences with particles.

Pāli Language

Language is the speech, spoken by the people for communication, composed of letters $(akkhar\bar{a})$ or alphabet. Pāli is the language in which is composed the *Tipitaka*. The word Pāli is used in the sense of "Text", sacred Text and the same thing for the etymology of Pāli is the Holy Text, the Scriptures or the canon.

Pāļi language is a branch of Indo-European family and a sister language of Sanskrit. Pāli was first committed to writing in $Srīlank\bar{a}$ in the 1st century AD for the Buddhist Canon. It is the spoken language. It has no own script but only sound. So, Pāļi is transliterated into various local scripts. Pāļi is an inflectional language (declension, conjugation, assimilation). Pāļi had contributed mostly to the growth of Myanmar as a national language. Brahmanism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sanskrit and Pāli have been well introduced to Myanmar from the beginning of our history of 4th century AD. The Myanmar invented Myanmar Script using *Pallava* Script. Moreover phonetics and ideas were taken from Pāļi language and literature. As Theravada Buddhism flourished in Myanmar, Pāļi became the medium of writing.

Structure of Pāli Language

Every language has its own alphabet which contains letters of that language. They are called *akkharā*, *lipi*, script or writing. The Pāli language contains 41 letters. It is divided into eight vowels, thirty two consonants and a nasal sound.

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Pāli letters in Myanmar script

Vowel	:	t?	tm?	£?	þ?	0?	00	<i>{</i>	Nb
Consonants	:	u!	C !	*1	Cl	i f			
		p!	qľ	Z٩	p∮	nf			
		#1	XP	! [j P	Pf			
		\v\ f	$\times l$	' f	"1	ef			
		Уľ	Z!	A!	bľ	rf			
		, 1	&1	$\vee l$	01	Oĺ			
			[1	V?	t∦(-	Ð			

Pāli letters in Roman script

Vowel	: a,	ā,	i,	ī,	u,	ū,	e,	0
Conconente	. 1r	lıh	~	ah	ė			
Consonants	: к,	KN,	g,	gh,	n			
	с,	ch,	j,	jh,	ň			
	ţ,	ţh,	ḍ,	ḍh,	ņ			
	t,	th,	d,	dh,	n			
	р,	ph,	b,	bh,	m			
	у,	r,	1,	v,	s,			
		h,	ļ,	ņ				

Structure of Pāli language has four parts of speech. They are:

- 1. Nāma (Noun)
- 2. *Ākhyāta* (Verb)
- 3. Upasāra (Prefix) and
- 4. *Nipāta* (Particle)

1. Nāma (Noun)

Nouns are studied under *vacana* (number), *linga* (gender) and *kāraka* (case). It has two numbers *ekavacana* (singular) and *bahuvacana* (plural). **Gender**, there are three genders *pullinga* (masculine), *napullinga* (neuter) and *itthilinga* (feminine). *Kāraka*, *kāraka* means the doer or the agent. It is related to the verb directly or indirectly. There are eight cases: *kattā* (subjet), *kamma* (object), *karana* (instrumental), etc...

Noun has three miscellaneous nouns: pronouns, adjectives and participles. In Pāli they are called *Sabbanāma*.

Pronouns: Pronouns are the same as noun. It is used instead of a noun, the person or thing in general. They may be divided into:

-Puggala nāma (personal pronoun)

-Nidassana nāma (demonstrative pronoun)

-Anvayī nāma (relative pronoun)

-Pucchā nāma (interrogative pronoun)

-Anīyama nāma (indefinite pronoun)

Puggala nāma (Personal Pronoun)

Person	Singular	Plural
First	ahaṃ (I)	mayam (we)
Second	tvam (you)	<i>tumhe</i> (you)
Third	so (he)	te, tāya (they)
	$s\bar{a}$ (she)	<i>tāni</i> (it)
	tam (it)	

eg. <u>Aham</u> dīpam āharāmi. (<u>I</u> carry the lamp.) <u>Mayam</u> goņe harāma. (<u>We</u> bring the oxen.) <u>Tvam</u> sīham passasi. (<u>You</u> see a lion.)

Nidassana nāma (Demonstrative Pronouns)

so, $s\bar{a}$, tam = that

eso, esā, etam, ayam, imam, idam = this

eg. So tāsam yuvatīnam tāni vatthāni vīkkīnitvā tāsam santikā mūlam labhissati.

 $(\underline{\mathbf{That}}$ one, having sold those clothes to those maidens will get money from them.)

Ayam ettha dhammatā.

(**This** is the rule here.)

Anvayī nāma (Relative Pronouns)

ya, yā, yo = who

yam = what

eg. <u>Yo</u> gāmam gacchati so mama putto hoti.

(He <u>who</u> goes to the village is my son.)

Pucchā nāma (Inerrogative Pronouns)

ka, $k\bar{a}$, ko= who

kim= which

eg. <u>Ko</u> tvam bhavasi. (<u>Who</u> are you?)

<u>*Kim</u> te puttena. (<u>What</u> use is the son for you?)*</u>

Anīyama nāma (Indefinite pronoun)

koci, kāci,= anyone= whoever

kaňci= anything= whichever

eg. Atthi nu te aňňo <u>koci</u> mayā upațțhākataro.

(Is there anyone else <u>who</u> is a better attendant to you?)

Adjective (*Nāmavisesana*): Adjectives qualify the nouns. They are possessive adjective and comparative adjective. They are called *Taddhita*.

- Possessive adjective (express that possession of the (*Assathi Taddhita*) quality, to be, praise, comparison and superior)

eg. $s\bar{\imath}la+v\bar{a} = s\bar{\imath}lav\bar{a}$ (virtuous)

Sīlavā puriso. (The man is virtuous.)

- Comparative adjective (It is used to compare nouns or (Visesa Taddhita) pronouns.)

There are three degrees of adjective: Positive degree, Comparative degree and Superlative degree.

eg.	Positive	Comparative	Superlative
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suci (pure) *sucitara* (more pure) *sucitama* (most pure)

Appamdaň ca medhāvī dhanam seț<u>tham</u> va rakkhati.

(The wise man guards earnestness as the great<u>est</u> treasure.)

In Pāli, Cardinal numerals are regarded as adjectives.

eg. eka=one, ti=three etc.

Participles: It is used as adjective, noun, or pronoun. Participles are formed by addition of suffixes to the root or base. There are three kinds of participle. They are:

-**Present Participle** - (expresses an incomplete action) (*Paccupanna kita*)

eg. Vicara<u>nto</u> samaņo. (The wandering monk)

Gāya<u>ntī</u> kaňňā. (The singing girl)

-**Past Participle** - (expresses the time perfect in the (*Atīta kita*) passive sense)

eg. *Dhammo bhikkhūhi suto*. (The doctoring <u>was listened</u> by the monks.)

-Future Participle - (expresses "fitness, suitability and (*kicca kita*) prosperity")

eg. Panditena kusalam kammam. (The wise man should do the good deed.)

2. Ākhyāta (Verb)

Express an action. In Pāli, to form a verb, conjugational sign and verbal suffixes are added to the roots (the origin of the verbs). Root sign $\sqrt{}$. The roots are divided into seven groups. They are called seven conjugations. Each conjugation has its own conjugational sign.

eg. 1st conjugational sign- "a"

2nd conjugational sign- "a" etc.

3rd conjugational sign- "ya" etc.

Verbal suffixes – There are five in numbers.

Present Tense (paccupanna)

eg. *labhā<u>mi</u>* - I get *labhā<u>ma</u>* - we get *labha<u>ti</u> – he get*

Imperative Mood (*ānatti*)

eg. gacchā<u>mi</u> – let me go gacchā<u>ma</u> – let us go gacchā<u>tu</u> – let him or her go

Optative Mood (sattamī)

eg. pac<u>eyyāmi</u> – I should cook pac<u>eyyāma</u> – we should cook pac<u>eyya</u> – he should cook

Past Tense (*ajjatanī*)

eg. gam<u>im</u> - I went

gam<u>imhā</u> – we went

gam i - he went

Future Tense (bhavissanti)

eg. paci<u>ssāmi</u> – I will cook

paci<u>ssāma</u> – we will cook

paci<u>ssati</u> – he will cook

They are divided into three tenses. They are Present, Past and Future which show time. Two moods are Imperative and Optative, which express intention. In verbal form we may distinguish the root, the stem, the personal ending and the vowel gradation.

The verbs can be classified into three: the finite verbs, the indefinite verbs and the derivative verbs or the secondary verbs.

-The finite verbs are primary and they are conjugated in the verbal suffixes.

eg. So paceyya. (He should cook.)

Aham gāyantim kaňňam passāmi. (I see the girl who is singing.)

-The indefinite verbs are:

Gerund ($Pubbak\bar{a}la$) = (having or after having)

eg. $\sqrt{gam + tv\bar{a}} = gantv\bar{a}$ (having gone)

Dārikā rudantī ammāya santikam gan<u>tvā</u> pīthe nisīdati.

(The crying girl, <u>having gone</u> to the mothers, sits on the bed.)

Infinitive (*Icchattha*) = (expresses purpose, motive and intention)

eg. $\sqrt{gah} > ganh\bar{a} + i + tum = ganhitum$ (to catch, to take) Paresam dhanam dhannam vā ganhitum mā cintetha.

(Don't think to take the wealth or the paddy of others.)

There are three participles. It is used as finite verb. They are:

Present participle - (expresses an incomplete action) (*paccupanna kita*)

eg. So vihārasmā āga<u>to</u> (hoti). (He has come from the monastery.)

Past participle - (expresses the time prefect in the (*atīta kita*) passive sense)

eg. Sūriye ugga<u>te</u> padum āni pupphanti.

(When the sun had arisen, the lotuses blossomed.)

Future participle - (expresses "fitness, suitability and (*kicca kita*) prosperity")

eg. Ayam maggo gan<u>tabbo</u>. (This road should be gone.)

They are not conjugated in the verbal suffixes.

-The derivative verbs are:

The causal verb - (expresses causation, urging) ($k\bar{a}rita kiriy\bar{a}$)

eg. Rājā kumāram yāne nisīdāpesi.

(The king made the prince sit in the chariot.)

The passive verb - (expresses the subject as the receiver of (*kammabhāva*) the action)

- eg. Mayam amhākam arīhi mārī<u>yāma</u>. (We are killed by our enemies.)
- The desiderative verbs (expresses the desire or wish to do that (*tumicchattha kiriyā*) which is denoted by the root)
- eg. \sqrt{tij} to bear endure

titij + sa > titikkha - wish to endure

- The denominative verbs- (expresses "to act as, to be like, to desire, $(n\bar{a}ma\ kiriy\bar{a})$ to make into, to use, etc,
- eg. Sețțhinā bahūnam yācakānam dānam dīyati.

(The alms are given to the many beggars by the rich man.)

- The intensive verbs (The intensive verb also called (*atisayattha kiriyā*) frequentative verbs express the frequent repetition of the intensification of the action denoted by the sump (root).
- eg. \sqrt{lap} to talk *lālappati* (to talk very much)

 \sqrt{kam} – to go - *caṅkamati* (to walk up and down)

3. Upasāra (Prefix)

Prefixes in $P\bar{a}$!i are added to both nouns and verbs. They generally modify the meaning of the root, or intensity it or totally alter it or give the opposite meaning. But in many cases the original meaning of the root is maintained. The prefixes are twenty in number. They are:

ati = beyond, across, over, past, very much

eg. Ayam kaňňā <u>ati</u>sundaro hoti. (This girl is <u>verv</u> beautiful.)

adhi = over, above, depending, in, upon

eg. *Rājā ratthassa <u>adhi</u>pati hoti*. (The king is a <u>chief</u> of country.)

anu = after, along, behind, according to, near to, less then, like, etc.

eg. Sīto migam <u>anu</u>dhāvati. (The lion runs <u>after</u> the deer.)

4. Nipāta (Particle)

The conjunctions, prepositions, adverbs and indeclinable are included in the particles. **Conjunctions** in Pāli are connected words of clauses. They are:

 $V\bar{a}$ $v\bar{a}$ = either....or

eg. Dārako <u>vā</u> kaňňā <u>vā</u> gāmam gacchissati.

(Either the boy or the girl will go to the village.)

Sace = If, etc.

eg. Sace gāmam gacchati, aham nagaram gacchissāmi.

(If he goes to the village, I'll go to the town.)

The prepositions are indeclinable used in the sentences. They generally followed the word they govern. These are:

pati = towards, never, against

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eg. Nadim <u>pati</u> caro palāyati. (The thief runs <u>towards</u> the river.)
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vinā = without

eg. <u>Vinā</u> dhanena mā jīva. (Do not live <u>without</u> wealth.)

upari = above, upon, on, etc.

eg. *Rakkhassa <u>upari</u> sakuņo hoti.* (The bird is <u>above</u> the tree.) Adverbs (indeclinable) are also *nipāta*. They are:

 $div\bar{a}$ – by day

eg. *Sā divā* Buddham vandati. (She worships the Buddha by day.)

ajja – today

eg. <u>Ajja</u> tvam kuhim gamissasi. (Where will you go today?)

at tha-then

eg. *Atha kho Bhagavā imaṃ udānaṃ udānesi.* (Then the Blessed One uttered this utterance.)

Conclusion

This paper gives the basic principles of Pāļi Grammar. Pāļi Grammar has four parts of speech: noun, verb, prefix and particle. The nouns are studied under number, gender, case and declension. Pronouns, adjectives and participles are placed under the nouns as miscellaneous nouns (*Sabbanāma*). The formation of a verb in Pāḷi: in a verbal form we may distinguished the root, the stem, the personal and the vowel gradation. There are three kinds of verb in Pāḷi. They are Infinite verb, Indefinite verb and Derivative verb. The prefixes are twenty in number. Particles are conjunction, prepositions and adverbs.

So, structure of Pāli Language Enlighten the teachers as to raise to a higher teaching methodology and an elevating language.

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