



AN ANALYSIS OF RAMNAD SRINIVASA IYENGAR'S *TILLĀNĀ* IN *LAKṢMĪŚA TĀLA*

¹V. K. Arun Kumar, ²Prof. Dr. S. Subbu Lakshmi

¹PhD Research Scholar, ²Professor and Director

¹School of Music and Fine Arts

¹Vels Institute of Science, Technology and Advanced Studies (VISTAS), Chennai, India

Abstract: *Tillānā* is a rhythm-focused composition in South Indian Classical Karnatik music. Similar to a *padam* or *jāvali*, a *tillānā* is a part of both music and dance concert repertoire. There are a few *tillānā*-s composed in not-so-common *tāla*-s of the 108 *tāla* system. A very popular musician-composer of such unique *tillānā*-s is Ramnad Srinivasa Iyengar. His *tillānā* in *rāga kāpi*, set to *Lakṣmīśa Tāla* is taken up for analysis. This article also attempts to highlight the various forms and structures of *lakṣmīśa tāla* which have been mentioned in different books over the years, and the ones in practice today.

Index Terms – Tillana, Karnatik, Tala, Laksmisa, Ramnad, Ramanathapuram, Srinivasa Iyengar, Poochi, Lakshmisa, Kapi, Druta, Laghu, Guru, Pluta, Anudruta, 108 tala system, 106th tala, Suguna Purushottaman, Sangita Candrikai, Tala Dipikai, N.C. Parthasarathy, Dwaraka Parthasarathy, Chellam Iyengar

I. INTRODUCTION

Karnatik Music has many compositional forms. *Tillānā* is a rhythm-oriented composition that is featured in both music and dance performances. Generally, the *pallavi* and *anupallavi* of a *tillānā* contain a combination of *jati*-s, and the *carana* has meaningful *sāhitya*. A *tillānā* is usually performed towards the end of a concert. Ramnad Srinivasa Iyengar (1860 – 1919), who was a popular musician and composer, has among his many compositions, a *tillānā* in *rāga kāpi*, set to *lakṣmīśa tāla*.

1.1 *Tāla*

Tāla defines the rhythmic framework of a composition. Every composition is set to a *tāla* that repeats from the beginning till the end, having specific sub-units assigned to it. There are also a few compositions that employ multiple such *tāla*-s within its structure. A string of such *tāla*-s is termed as *tālamālika*. Books published on *tāla* from as early as the 19th century mention the 108 *tāla* scheme. This is a set of special *tāla*-s that are performed rarely; some of them very complex, and comprising of multiple uncommon sub-units. *Lakṣmīśa* is the 106th in the 108 *tāla* system.

II. ANALYSIS OF THE *TILLĀNĀ* IN *LAKṢMĪŚĀ TĀLA*

The *kāpi rāga tillānā*, *Tārādhīpānana* composed by Ramnad Srinivasa Iyengar is analysed in this article.

The *tāla* structure of this *tillānā* employs the *aṅga*-s or sub-units, *anudruta*, *druta*, *laghu*¹ and *guru*. While *anudruta* and *guru* are employed once, *druta* is rendered twice and *laghu*, three times. The order of the *aṅga*-s is *druta*, *anudruta*, *druta*, *laghu*, *laghu*, *laghu* and *guru*.

symbolic structure of <i>tāla</i>	O	U	O	I	I	I	8
<i>aṅga</i>-s or subunits of <i>tāla</i>	<i>druta</i>	<i>anudruta</i>	<i>druta</i>	<i>laghu</i>	<i>laghu</i>	<i>laghu</i>	<i>guru</i>
count	2	1	2	4	4	4	8

This *tillānā* is first seen published in 1980 in the book, Compositions of Sri Ramnad Srinivasa Iyengar in Tamil², and later in 1982, in Compositions of Ramanathapuram Asthana Vidwan, Srīman Poochi Srinivasa Iyengar with notation in Tamil script, edited by Salem D. Chellam Iyengar³. In both these books, the *lakṣmīśā tāla tillānā* is presented with the same sub-units, form and structure. In this article, the *tillānā* published in 1980 is taken up for analysis.

Rāga kāpi is a *janya* of the 22nd *meḷakartā* *Kharaharapriya*. The *rāga* scale given in this book⁴ is as follows:

<i>ārōhaṇa</i>	s r g , m r p m p d n ś
<i>avarōhaṇa</i>	ś n d p m g r s

Starting in *tāra sthāyi*, the first line of the *tillānā* gives a clear picture of the *rāga*. The phrase *m p śnn*, - *p m g r* brings out the essence of the *rāga*. ‘*Tārādhīpa*’ and ‘*ŚrīRāma*’, the first two words in the two lines of the *pallavi* respectively, have the exact structure and placement, with the second syllable match – *dvitīyākṣara prāsa*.

pallavi

O	U	O	I	I
ś , , , ś n ś n p , m p ś n n , p m g r s , r , m , p ,				
tā . . . rā . . . dhi pā . . . na . na . da śa . ra . tha .				
I			8	
n , m , p , - m p n , ś , r , ś m ġ r ś n p m p n				
ta . na . ya . sa . ra . sa . . ni . nu . nam . . . mi				

O	U	O	I	I
n m p , ś n ś , r , ġ m ġ r ś , ś , ś n r ś n d ś n n ,				
śrī . . . rā . . . ma . smi tha mu . kha śrī . . . dha ra .				
I			8	
p d n ś n d p , n d d p g , g r r , s r m p n ś r , ġ r				
śrī . . . ni . vā . sa . - nan nu . bro . . vu . mu . .				

¹ *Laghu* denotes a *catuśra jāti laghu* with 4 counts

² Parthasarathy N.C., Dwaraka (1980) Compositions of Sri Ramnad Srinivasa Iyengar in Tamil

³ Pg 116

⁴ Parthasarathy N.C., Dwaraka (1980) Compositions of Sri Ramnad Srinivasa Iyengar in Tamil, Pg 112

The *tillānā* has only two sections, *pallavi* and *carāṇa*. *Anupallavi* does not feature in this composition. Traditionally, the *carāṇa* of a *tillānā* contains meaningful *sāhitya*, rather than the *pallavi*. However, here, the *pallavi* line has meaningful *sāhitya*, while the *carāṇa* has *jati*-s. The *pallavi* and *carāṇa* are of two *āvarta*-s⁵ each. The *pallavi* is set in first speed. The *carāṇa* having a good mix of *jati*-s and *svāra* combinations, is presented in the second speed. The melodic beauty of *kāpi* is preserved even when the *tillānā* is rendered in *madhyamakāla*. The *svāra* combinations in the *carāṇa*, make wonderful transition notes between the *jati*-s.

carāṇa

O	U	O	I	I
ś , , , ř ś n d n p m p ś n , p m g p m g r s r ṅ s				
tām . .	ř ś	n - ta ki ṭa	ta ka ta ṇam p m g	ta ka dhimi s r ṅ s
	I		8	
g s g g , g s g m n n d p m g , r - s r m p n ś ř				
ta dhīm dhīm ta s g		m - driguḍutaka	dhī nu s r ta dhiṅ gi ṇa tōm	

The *jati*-s like *nādrudrudru* and *tōmdrudrudru*, form excellent tongue twisters which can be rendered only with rigorous practice.

O	U	O	I	I
ś n p n ś ř m ġ , ř ś ř n ś p n m p r m p n ś ř ġ ř				
tām drudru	till .	. lā na	drudrunā dru p n m p	nādrudrudru tōmdru dru dru
	I		8	
ś ř m ġ ġ ř ś n p - ġ ř ś n p - p ř ś ř - ś n p - m p - n				
ś ř - ta kata dhiṅgiṇa		tōmtadhiṅgiṇatōm	dhiṅgiṇatōm	giṇatōm ṇatōmtōm

The *jati* at the end of the *carāṇa* of the *tillānā* employs a *gōpuccha yati*⁶.

<i>ta dhiṅ gi ṇa tōm</i>
<i>dhiṅ gi ṇa tōm</i>
<i>gi ṇa tōm</i>
<i>ṇa tōm</i>
<i>tōm</i>

III. DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF *LAKṢMĪŚA TĀLA*

In the course of study for this article, multiple sources mentioning varied structures for *lakṣmīśa tāla* have been found.

Manicka Mudaliyar's Saṅgīta Candrikai mentions *lakṣmīśa tāla* as one with 25 counts, with the structure as given below:

symbolic structure of <i>tāla</i>	I	I	O	Ō	ḡ
<i>aṅga</i> -s or subunits of <i>tāla</i>	<i>laghu</i>	<i>laghu</i>	<i>druta</i>	<i>druta śekhara</i>	<i>pluta</i>
count	4	4	2	3	12

⁵ One complete cycle of a *tāla* is called an *āvarta*

⁶ This is a pattern like a cow's tail – broad in the beginning and tapering off at the end

In this book⁷, a clear *svara* combination is provided to determine the count even though there is a lack of clarity in the symbols due to print quality:

svara combination	srsr	srgg	sr	srg	srgmrgmrgm
count	4	4	2	3	12

Prof. K. Ramachandran's Tāla Dīpikai⁸, Vol II, also mentions *lakṣmīśa tāla* with the same structure.

Another form of *lakṣmīśa tāla* is prevalent among musicians. Suguna Purushottaman's composition in this *tāla*, '*Lakṣmī samēta Nārayaṇa dēvanai*'⁹ in *rāga mōhanam* follows the structure below:

aṅga-s or subunits of tāla	<i>khaṇḍa cāpu</i>	<i>laghu</i>	<i>laghu</i>	<i>pluta</i>
count	5	4	4	12

This structure is presented by Suguna Purushottaman's disciples¹⁰ while performing the song and the notation from the book¹¹ shows this as well.

Certain other online sources¹² have mentioned *lakṣmīśa tāla* with a count of 24 with the structure shown below:

symbolic structure of tāla	O	O	I	I	ḡ
aṅga-s or subunits of tāla	<i>druta</i>	<i>druta</i>	<i>laghu</i>	<i>laghu</i>	<i>pluta</i>
count	2	2	4	4	12

IV. OBSERVATIONS

While the count as well as sub-units of *lakṣmīśa tāla* has had multiple forms documented, the structure and form of the *tāla* in the *tillānā* chosen for analysis, has been consistent. The availability of printed notation from authentic sources has been instrumental in maintaining this standard of rendition. This *tillānā* has been sung in concerts by many musicians like Semmangudi Srinivasier¹³.

There is a note printed right below the notation of the *tillānā* in the source¹⁴, observing that the composer had probably changed the count of this *tāla* from 24 to 25, to make it easier for musicians to practice and perform this composition. However, based on multiple references highlighted in the earlier section of this article, the 25-count *lakṣmīśa tāla* seems to have been prevalent even during the composer's time.

V. CONCLUSION

This *tillānā* is a wonderful addition to the Karnatik Music repertoire as an academically stimulating composition which can also be performed as a thrilling presentation in concerts for musicians. Such unique compositions pave way to multiple research projects providing ample scope to expand one's scholarly horizons.

⁷ Saṅgīta Candrikai (1902), Manikka Mudaliar, Pg 168

⁸ Tāla Dīpikai Vol II (1962), Prof. K. Ramachandran Pg 67, 72

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gIvAbJVSEIk> – Suguna Purushottaman Audio

¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJURpCsUY9A> – Suguna Purushottaman's disciples' video at 13:05 min

¹¹ Kadambam: Compositions of Smt. Suguna Purushottaman (1995)

¹² <https://www.angelfire.com/mb/mridhangam/108Tālas.html>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIqY9PtysqI>

¹³ <https://abhijaanaathi.com/release/seetharama-Tillāna-kāpi/>

¹⁴ Parthasarathy N.C., Dwaraka (1980) Compositions of Sri Ramnad Srinivasa Iyengar in Tamil, Pg 114

REFERENCES

- Parthasarathy N.C., Dwaraka (1980) Compositions of Sri Ramnad Srinivasa Iyengar in Tamil.
Sangita Kalashala Publications, Madras
- Iyengar, Salem D. Chellam (1982) Compositions of Ramanathapuram Asthana Vidwan
Sriman "Poochi" Srinivasa Iyengar. Higginbothams, Chennai
- Ramachandran Prof. K (1962) Tala Dipikai. Published by the author
- Mudaliyar, Manicka (1902) Sangita Candrikai. Chandrika publishers, Chennai

