

Tāla Anubhava: Experiencing South Indian Rhythm

A tala trainer for self-study by *T.R. Sundareshan* (lessons) & *Ludwig Pesch* (concept & publication) © 2024

Please note: for some of the basic lessons your tutor provides pauses to be filled by participants while the accompaniment of cymbals and claps continues. This is followed by yet another repetition by the tutor.

While practicing purely with the help of recording is the most effective method if repeated often, the transcripts of these exercises are also given in the following pages and in *Eloquent Percussion*.

As with any new subject, a lesson should be repeated several times before proceeding to the next lesson. Every student will soon find the right pace that suits his or her ambition and musical experience.

Page numbers refer to the corresponding explanations and exercises found in the publication *Eloquent Percussion: A Guide to South Indian Rhythm* by Ludwig Pesch and T.R. Sundareshan (eka.grata publications, Amsterdam, 1996, ISBN 90-75785-01-1)

For more information on South Indian music, please refer also to *The Oxford Illustrated Companion to South Indian Classical Music* by Ludwig Pesch Oxford University Press ISBN 9780195699982

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LESSONS

| n. | Announcement | Explanation | Page |
|----|---|---|------|
| 1 | <p><i>ādi tāla</i> "ta ka dhi mi ta ka ju nu" <i>trikāla</i> = 3 speeds</p> <p>1st speed: 1 beat (<i>kriyā</i>) = 1 syllable (<i>jati</i>) = 8 <i>mātrā</i> per <i>āvarta</i> 2nd speed: 1 beat (<i>kriyā</i>) = 2 syllables (<i>jati</i>) = 16 <i>mātrā</i> per <i>āvarta</i> 3rd speed: 1 beat (<i>kriyā</i>) = 4 syllables (<i>jati</i>) = 32 <i>mātrā</i> per <i>āvarta</i></p> | <p>Each cycle (<i>āvarta</i>) of <i>ādi tāla</i> has 8 counts or "gestures" (<i>kriyā</i>): "ta ka dhi mi ta ka ju nu"; and each sub-unit (<i>mātrā</i>) corresponds to a syllable (<i>jati</i>).</p> <p>Here the three speeds are executed by way of doubling and quadrupling the number of syllables or <i>mātrā</i>:</p> | 26 |
| 2 | <p><i>miśra cāpu tāla</i> "ta ki ṭa ta ka dhi mi" <i>trikāla</i> = 3 speeds</p> <p>medium speed: 1 beat (<i>kriyā</i>) = 1 syllable (<i>jati</i>) half speed: 2 beats (<i>kriyā</i>) = 1 syllable (<i>jati</i>) medium speed: 1 beat (<i>kriyā</i>) = 1 syllable (<i>jati</i>) double speed: 1 beat (<i>kriyā</i>) = 2 syllables (<i>jati</i>)</p> | <p>Each cycle (<i>āvarta</i>) of <i>miśra cāpu tāla</i> has 7 counts or "gestures" (<i>kriyā</i>): "ta ki ṭa ta ka dhi mi".</p> <p>Here the three speeds consist of a medium speed, half speed, and double speed while the hands maintain the original tempo by way of clapping:</p> | 33 |
| 3 | <p><i>khaṇḍa cāpu tāla</i> "ta ka ta ki ṭa" <i>trikāla</i> = 3 speeds</p> | 5 syllables | 33 |
| 4 | <p><i>rūpaka tāla</i> "ta ki ṭa" <i>trikāla</i> = 3 speeds</p> | 3 syllables | - |
| 5 | <p><i>ādi tāla</i> <i>prastāra</i> variations in <i>caturaśra gati</i></p> | <p>Re-distribution of 8 units/gestures (<i>akṣara/kriyā</i>) and groups of 4 syllables ("ta ka dhi mi" or "ta ka ju nu" (<i>caturaśra gati</i>, $8 \times 4 = 32$ <i>mātrā</i>):</p> <p>4 groups of 3 <i>mātrā</i> ("ta ki ṭa") plus one group of 4 <i>mātrā</i> ("ta ka dhi mi"); $4 \times 3 = 12$; $12 + 4 = 16$ <i>mātrā</i>; twice per cycle ($2 \times 16 = 32$ <i>mātrā</i>)</p> | - |
| 6 | <p><i>ādi tāla</i> <i>prastāra</i> variations in <i>tisra gati</i></p> | <p>Re-distribution of 8 units/gestures (<i>akṣara/kriyā</i>) and groups of 3 syllables ("ta ki ṭa"); <i>tisra gati</i> $8 \times 3 = 24$ <i>mātrā</i>: 6 groups of 4 <i>mātrā</i> ("ta ka dhi mi"); $6 \times 4 =$ also 24 <i>mātrā</i></p> | - |

| | | | |
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| 7 | <i>ādi tāla</i> <i>prastāra</i> variations in <i>caturaśra gati</i> double speed | (as 5-6) | - |
| 8 | <i>ādi tāla</i> <i>prastāra</i> variations in <i>tisra gati</i> double speed | (as 5-6) | - |
| 9 | <i>ādi tāla</i> <i>prastāra</i> variations in <i>khaṇḍa gati</i> "ta ka ta ki ṭa" | Re-distribution of 8 units/gestures (<i>akṣara/kriyā</i>) and groups of 5 syllables "ta ka ta ki ṭa" (<i>khaṇḍa gati</i> ; 8 x 5 = 40 <i>mātrā</i>): 5 groups of 8 <i>mātrā</i> ("ta ka dhi mi", "ta ka ju nu", = also 40 <i>mātrā</i>) | - |
| | <i>Saptatāla</i> : the traditional seven <i>tālas</i> of Karnatic music known as <i>sūlādi saptatāla</i> | (upper line = popular name; lower line = technical name of each <i>tāla</i>) | 17-18 |
| 10 | <i>dhruva tāla</i> = 14 <i>kriyās</i> <i>caturaśra jāti dhruvā tāla</i> | | 28 |
| 11 | <i>maṭhya tāla</i> = 10 <i>kriyās</i> <i>caturaśra jāti maṭhya tāla</i> | | 28 |
| 12 | <i>rūpaka tāla</i> = 6 <i>kriyās</i> <i>caturaśra jāti rūpaka tāla</i> | | 29 |
| 13 | <i>jhampa tāla</i> = 10 <i>kriyās</i> <i>miśra jāti jhampa tāla</i> | | 30 |
| 14 | <i>tripuṭa tāla</i> = 7 <i>kriyās</i> <i>tisra jāti tripuṭa tāla</i> | | 30 |
| 15 | <i>aṭa tāla</i> = 14 <i>kriyās</i> <i>khaṇḍa jāti aṭa tāla</i> | | 31 |
| 16 | <i>ēka tāla</i> = 4 <i>kriyās</i> <i>caturaśra jāti ēka tāla</i> | | 31 |
| 17 | <i>ēka tāla</i> = 9 <i>kriyās</i> <i>saṅkīrṇa jāti ēka tāla</i> | | - |

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|----|--|---|----|
| 18 | Syllables <i>jati</i> or <i>śolkaṭṭu</i> | <p>one unit "ta" = 1</p> <p>two units "ta ka" = 2</p> <p>two units "ki ta" = 2</p> <p>three units "ta ki ṭa" = 3</p> <p>three units "ta dhi mi" = 3</p> <p>four units "ta ka dhi mi" = 4</p> <p>four units "ta ka dhi na" = 4</p> <p>four units "ta ka ju nu" = 4</p> <p>five units "ta dhi(n) ki na tom" = 5</p> <p>five units "ta ka ta ki ṭa" = 5</p> <p>six units "ta dhī - ki na tom" = 6</p> <p>six units "ta ka dhi mi ta ka" = 6</p> <p>six units "ta ka ta ka dhi na" = 6</p> <p>seven units "tā - dhīn - ki na tom" = 7</p> <p>seven units "ta ki ṭa ta ka dhi mi" = 7</p> <p>seven units "ta ka ta dhin ki na tom" = 7</p> <p>eight units "ta ka dhi mi ta ka ju nu" = 8</p> <p>eight units "ta dhī - kī - nā - tom" = 8</p> <p>eight units "ta jāṃ - ta dhin ki na tom" = 8</p> <p>nine units "ta ka na ka ta dhin ki na tom" = 9</p> <p>nine units "tā - dhīn - kī - nā - tom" = 9</p> <p>ten units "ta ki ṭa jāṃ - ta dhi ki na tom" = 10</p> <p>ten units "tā - jāṃ - ta dhi ki na tom" = 10</p> | 13 |
|----|--|---|----|

| | | | |
|----|--|--|---|
| 19 | <p><i>jati</i> or <i>solkaṭṭu</i> exercises leading to first beat with "jam" ādi tāla, 8 <i>kriyās</i></p> | <p>Various combinations of 1, 2, 3 ... 10 syllables lead to final "/jam" which coincides with the first beat (<i>samam</i>) of ādi tāla:</p> <p>"/jam" = 0 "ta /jam" = 1 "ta /jam" = 1 "ta ka /jam" = 2 "ki ṭa /jam" = 2 "ta ki ṭa/jam" = 3 "ta dhi mi /jam" = 3 "ta ka dhi mi /jam" = 4 "ta ka dhi na /jam" = 4 "ta ka ju nu /jam" = 4 "ta dhin ki na tom /jam" = 5 "ta ka ta ki ṭa /jam" = 5 "ta dhīn - ki na tom /jam" = 6 "ta ka dhi mi ta ka /jam" = 6 "ta ka ta ka dhi na /jam" = 6 "tā - dhīn - ki na tom /jam" = 7 "ta ki ṭa ta ka dhi mi /jam" = 7 "ta ka ta dhin ki na tom /jam" = 7 "ta ka dhi mi ta ka ju nu /jam" = 8 "ta dhīn - kīn - nā - tom /jam" = 8 "ta jāṁ - ta dhin ki na tom /jam" = 8 "ta ka na ka ta dhin ki na tom /jam" = 9 "tā - dhīn - kī - nā - tom /jam" = 9 "ta ki ta jāṁ - ta dhin ki na tom /jam" = 10 "tā - - jāṁ - ta dhin ki na tom /jam" = 10</p> | - |
|----|--|--|---|

| | | | |
|----|--|--|-------|
| 20 | Shifting the starting point (<i>eḍuppu</i>) ādi tāla, 8 <i>kriyās</i> | Note: each step is repeated basic pattern (<i>sarvalaghu</i>) "ta ka dhi mi ta ka ju nu" = 8 (4 + 4) 1st shifting pattern one syllable is <u>added</u> at each new stage (i.e. after one repetition): "ta ka dhi mi ta ka ta ki ṭa" = 9 (4 + 5) until the basic pattern (<i>sarvalaghu</i>) begins on the 2nd count (<i>kriyā</i>) of ādi tāla (i.e. the <i>sama eḍuppu</i> indicated by the small finger) 2nd shifting pattern one syllable is <u>removed</u> at each new stage (i.e. after one repetition) "ta ka dhi mi ta ki ṭa" = 7 (4 + 3) until the basic pattern (<i>sarvalaghu</i>) again begins on the 1st count (<i>kriyā</i>) of ādi tāla (i.e. <i>sama eḍuppu</i> indicated by a clap) | 35-37 |
| 21 | Rhythmic embellishment (<i>tīrmāṇam</i>) ādi tāla | | 39-41 |
| 22 | Exercise in rūpaka tāla | (see p. 7 below - [1] <i>Exercise in rūpaka tāla</i>) | - |
| 23 | <i>kōrvai</i> in ādi tāla: the fast syllables used here are: "ki ta ta ka" "ki ta ta ka ta ri ki ta" | (see p. 8 below - [2] <i>kōrvai in ādi tāla</i>) | - |
| 24 | <i>Śolkaṭṭu</i> for a <i>pallavi</i> ādi tāla | Medium tempo (see p. 8 below - [3] <i>Instrumental pallavi, ādi tāla; I madhya kāla</i>) a decreasing rhythmic pattern, followed by increasing pattern (this de- and increasing pattern is known as <i>ḍamaru yati</i>); slow speed (16 <i>kriyā</i>) | - |
| 25 | The same <i>pallavi</i> in <i>trikāla</i> (three speeds); starting with <i>madhya kāla</i> (the medium speed); and <i>vilamba kāla</i> (the slower speed); and again the <i>madhya kāla</i> (medium speed); and the faster speed (<i>durita kāla</i>) | - 1 x medium (<i>madhya kāla</i>) - 1 x slow (<i>vilamba kāla</i>) - 2 x medium (<i>madhya kāla</i>) - 4 x fast (<i>durita kāla</i> = <i>druta kāla</i>) - 1 x medium (<i>madhya kāla</i>) (see pp. 9 & 10 below - [4] <i>Instrumental pallavi, ādi tāla; II trikāla</i>) | - |

[1] exercise in rūpaka tāla (see n. 22)

The basic reckoning pattern: rūpaka tāla = 3 units (*kriyā*) of 4 sub-units (*mātrā*) each = 12 *mātrā*

| | | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 (beat) | 2 (beat) | 3 (wave hand) |
| (1 2 3 4) | (5 6 7 8) | (9 10 11 12) | ta ka dhi mi | ta ka dhi mi | ta ka dhi mi |

1 a

| | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|------------|-----------|---------|--------------|
| tām - ki ta | ta ka dīn - | dīn - nā - | | | |
| dīn - ki ta | ta ka dīn - | dīn - nā - | | | |
| tām - ki ta | ta ka dīn - | dīn - nā - | tām - - - | - - - - | ta ka dhi na |

1 b (repetition)

| | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|------------|-----------|---------|--------------|
| tām - ki ta | ta ka dīn - | dīn - nā - | | | |
| dīn - ki ta | ta ka dīn - | dīn - nā - | | | |
| tām - ki ta | ta ka dīn - | dīn - nā - | tām - - - | - - - - | ta ka dhi na |

2

| | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|------------|-----------|---------|--------------|
| tām - ki ta | ta ka dīn - | dīn - nā - | tām - - - | - - - - | ta ka dhi na |
| dīn - ki ta | ta ka dīn - | dīn - nā - | tām - - - | - - - - | ta ka dhi na |

3

| | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|--------------|--|--|--|
| tām - ki ta | ta ka dīn - | dīn - nā - | | | |
| dīn - ki ta | ta ka dīn - | dīn - nā - | | | |
| tām - ki ta | ta ka dīn - | ta ka dhi na | | | |

4 conclusion (*tīrmāṇam*; thrice = repeat twice)

| | | | | | |
|-------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|---------|--------------|
| tām - ta ka | dhi na tām - | ta ka dhi na | tām - - - | - - - - | ta ka dhi na |
| tām - ta ka | dhi na tām - | ta ka dhi na | tām - - - | - - - - | ta ka dhi na |
| tām - ta ka | dhi na tām - | ta ka dhi na | | | |

5 repeat from repeat the entire exercise from 1 a

6 end on final "tām"

| |
|-----|
| tām |
|-----|

[2] *kōrvai* in *ādi tāla* (see n. 23)

medium tempo: *ādi tāla* 8 syllables per count (*kriyā*)

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| tā - - - - ta - | dīn - - - tā - - - | jam - - - - - | - - - - kitataka | tā - - - - ta - | dīn - - - tā - - - | jām - - - - - | kitataka tarikita |
| tā - - - - ta - | dīn - - - tā - - - | jām - - - - ta - | dhin ki na tom | tām - - - - ta - | dhin ki na tom | tām - - - - ta - | dhin ki na tom |

repeat; then end with "tām" on the first beat (*samam*)

[3] Instrumental *pallavi*, *ādi tāla*; I *madhya kāla* (see n. 24)

iraṇḍu kalai = 2 counts (*kriyā*) per *akṣara* of *ādi tāla*

Note: upper row = rhythmic solmisation (*jati*); lower row = musical notes (*svara*); "tōm" = "jām"

medium tempo (*madhya kāla*)

| 1 | | 2 | | 3 | | 4 | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|------------|-----------|------------|----------|
| tā - kā - | dī - nā - | tōm - - - | dīn - dīn - | nā - tōm - | - - dīn - | nā - tōm - | - tā - |
| ni - sa - | ni - da - | pa - - - | sa - ni - | da - pa - | - - ni - | da - pa - | - - da - |

| 5 | | 6 | | 7 | | 8 | |
|-----------|----------|-----------|---------|----------|-----------|---------|------------|
| tōm - - - | tā - - - | tōm - - - | - - - - | tā - - - | Tōm - - - | - - - - | tā - - - - |
| pa - - - | ma - - - | pa - - - | - - - - | pa - - - | da - - - | - - - - | ni - - - |

| 9 | | 10 | | 11 | | 12 | |
|-----------|---------|---------|----------|----------|---------|----------|----------|
| tōm - - - | - - - - | - - - - | tā - - - | dī - - - | - - - - | kī - - - | nā - - - |
| sa - - - | - - - - | - - - - | ga - - - | ri - - - | - - - - | sa - - - | ni - - - |

| 13 | | 14 | | 15 | | 16 | |
|-----------|----------|---------|------------|---------|----------|----------|-----------|
| tōm - - - | tā - - - | - - - | dī - - - | - - - - | kī - - - | nā - - - | tōm - - - |
| da - - - | ri - - - | - - - - | sa - - - - | - - - - | ni - - - | da - - - | pa - - - |

[4] Instrumental pallavi, ādi tāla; II *trikāla* (see n. 25)

medium tempo (*madhyama kāla*)

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|------------|-----------|------------|----------|
| 1 | | 2 | | 3 | | 4 | |
| tā - kā - | dī - nā - | tōm - - - | dīn - dīn - | nā - tōm - | - - dīn - | nā - tōm - | - - tā - |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------|----------|-----------|---------|----------|-----------|---------|------------|
| 5 | | 6 | | 7 | | 8 | |
| tōm - - - | tā - - - | tōm - - - | - - - - | tā - - - | tōm - - - | - - - - | tā - - - - |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------|---------|---------|----------|----------|---------|----------|----------|
| 9 | | 10 | | 11 | | 12 | |
| tōm - - - | - - - - | - - - - | tā - - - | dī - - - | - - - - | kī - - - | nā - - - |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------|----------|---------|----------|---------|----------|----------|-----------|
| 13 | | 14 | | 15 | | 16 | |
| tōm - - - | tā - - - | - - - - | dī - - - | - - - - | kī - - - | nā - - - | tōm - - - |

fast tempo (*druta kāla* = *durita kāla*)

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|------------|-----------|------------|----------|
| 1 | | 2 | | 3 | | 4 | |
| ta ka dhi na | tōm - din dīn | na tōm - dīn | na tōm - ta | tōm - tā - | tōm - - - | tā - tōm - | - - tā - |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|------------|----------|----------|------------|
| 5 | | 6 | | 7 | | 8 | |
| tōm - - - | - - tā - | dī - - - | kī - nā - | tōm - tā - | - - dī - | - - kī - | nā - tōm - |

slow tempo (*vilamba kāla*)

| | | | | | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1 | | 2 | | 3 | | 4 | |
| tā --- | kā --- | dī --- | nā --- | tōm --- | ---- | dīn --- | dīn --- |
| 5 | | 6 | | 7 | | 8 | |
| nā --- | tōm --- | ---- | dīn --- | nā --- | tōm --- | ---- | tā --- |
| 9 | | 10 | | 11 | | 12 | |
| tōm --- | ---- | tā --- | ---- | tōm --- | ---- | ---- | ---- |
| 13 | | 14 | | 15 | | 16 | |
| tā --- | ---- | tōm --- | ---- | ---- | ---- | tā --- | ---- |
| 17 | | 18 | | 19 | | 20 | |
| tōm --- | ---- | ---- | ---- | ---- | ---- | tā --- | ---- |
| 21 | | 22 | | 23 | | 24 | |
| dī --- | ---- | ---- | ---- | kī --- | ---- | nā --- | ---- |
| 25 | | 26 | | 27 | | 28 | |
| tōm --- | ---- | tā --- | ---- | ---- | ---- | dī --- | ---- |
| 29 | | 30 | | 31 | | 32 | |
| ---- | ---- | kī --- | ---- | nā --- | ---- | tōm --- | ---- |