

## A Precise chronicle on obsolete ragas and talas of old south Travancore

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### Abstract

South Travancore state is a portion of Travancore kingdom which ruled the southernmost part of India from 1729 to 1949 AD. This region currently falls in an area stretching from North Thiruvananthapuram to Kanyakumari. Padmanabhapuram was the capital of Travancore (upto 1795) and later Thruvananthapuram (upto 1949), both falling in the southernmost Travancore region. Hence, south of Travancore played a pivotal role in the political, administrative, cultural welfare and functioning of the Kingdom. On November 1, 1956, the state of Kerala was created by uniting the Malayalam-speaking areas of the Travancore-Cochin Union with Malabar and the land of Tamil speaking went to Tamil (Parassala to Kanyakumari). Hence the Travancore province got split into two. Kerala music has always attracted the world by its unique rendering and tradition. Similarly, while analyzing the cultural history of this state I realized a beautiful blend of both Kerala as well as Tamil Influence in tradition, language and style of presentation. I felt that the most impressive factor among the list are their ragas and talas. The ragas and talas of south Travancore music is mostly obsolete or gone out of popularity due to the influence of Karnatic music which has influenced every art forms of south India. This article is my small effort to study about the forgotten ragas and talas of south Travancore precisely.

**Key Words :** Travancore, Karnatak music, talam, dravidian culture, kathakali music

### Research Paper

**Travancore** kingdom was a big repository of “Dravidian culture”, and was a seat of music after Vijayanagara period. The unique traditional art forms were the strength of Travancore that later got influenced by the arrival of Karnatic music.

The South Travancore state was a rich reservoir of culture, trades, traditions and resources. The ancient music of Travancore synchronized well with what we now call the Dravidian music. The antiquity of the music of the Dravidians can be traced back approximately to 4000BC. The treaties on the popular instrument “Yazh” well known to their old inhabitants of the Tamil Nadu, bears ample evidence to this.

Dravidian music, to cilappadikaram and then to the Tamil music of sangam period. Later entering the tevaram music, Krishnanattam, Ramanattam and Kathakali, the Travancore music had a long journey to travel and the evolution of ragas could be seen from Pans to Kathakali music.

Apart from the ragas used for Tevaram and the ragas that we come across in Karnatic music at present, there are certain ragas which are found only in the music of Kerala. These ragas must have belonged to the group of the ancient Dravidian ragas which faded out long before the age of the Tevarams. [1]

South Travancore state can be proud of having the procession of such rare ragas like Puraneer, padi, innisa, kanakkurinchi, Indalam, Khandaram. etc [2-3] included in her musiclore. These ragas form themselves the backbone of the religious melodies of the past.

Coming to the ragas of south Travancore state, I had referred to many Attakadhas, classical compositions and other works of patrons and other composers pertaining to this region. I selected some rare obsolete ragas and did a comparative study with Karnatic ragas and their source. In some cases, eminent scholars have rediscovered these ragas and have found existence of these ragas in another art forms with minor variations. In this paper I am giving

a very brief description of selective ragas from the list and their analysis.

## 1. Ragas of South Travancore:

### 1.1 INDALAM

The raga was 73<sup>rd</sup> raga among the group of 103 main pans of the Ancient Dravidian.[4] This raga has found existence in Tevarams too.

Sarangadeva (1210-1247AD) has described Indalam or “Indolaka” as an audavaraga. According to Sangitaratnakara, this is a janyam of Kharaharapiya (corresponding to the sudha madhyama moorchana).[5] It is a rishabha dhaivatha varjya raga having the arohana and avarohana as sgmpns – snpmgs.

Besides shadja and panchama, the swaras used are Sadharana Gandharam, Sudhamadhyamam and Kaisiki nishadha.

In another version that we find in north, this raga is considered as janya of Kalyani, with rishabha and panchama as varjya swaras.[6] The arohana and avarohana are sgmdns-sndmgs.

But according to Venkitamakhi, ‘Hindolam’ is the janyam of the 20<sup>th</sup> mela Natabhairavi and the varjya swaras are rishabha and panchama. The arohana and avarohana being sgmdns – sndmgs.[7]

Thus we find that the same raga ‘Indalam’ existed in three different forms in Indian music. Of these, the ‘Indola’ that was sung for Tevaram was the one mentioned in Sangitaratnakara, which has the arohana and avarohana as sgmpns – snpmgs.[8] This very same raga used in Tevarams, and which is referred to in sangitaratnakara is termed as ‘sudha dhanyasi’ by Venkitamakhi in his classification. Sudhadhanyasi is a janyam of Kharaharapiya, omitting the rishabha and dhaivatha. It is referred as a morning raga with shadja as grihaswara and having the arohana and avarohana as sgmpns – snpmgs. Hence the ancient Tevara hindola can be said to be the same as sudha dhanyasi of Venkitamakhi.

In sangita Candrika by Attoor Krishna pisharadi, the raga Indalam is described as the janyam of Natabhairavi with rishabha and panchamam as varjya swaras, arohana and avarohana comes to be smgmdns – sndmgs.

The Hindola raga is sung at present by the tevaram singers is the same as Lalithapanchama of Venkitamakhi. It is

considered to be the janya of vakulabharanam. Hence the rishabha and panchama are varjya swaras. Mr. T. Lakshmanan Pillai in his “Essay on ragas” says that what is referred to as Hindola in Tevarams is the same as Nadanamakriya. We find evidence of the same in the songs sung by the famous Tevaram School at Sucheendram. These Indala pieces are sung there in “Nadanamakriya” having the arohana and avarohana as srgmpdn – ndpmgrs.

Thus we find that raga Indala, which was once considered as the janyam of Kharaharapiya, has undergone different changes as is at present sung as Nadanamakriya by Tevaram schools and also as the janyam of the 20<sup>th</sup> Mela Natabhairavi by the Karnatic schools.

But it is indeed a strange fact to note that if we examine the ‘Indala’ (Hindola) used in the sopana music of Kerala, we find that it is the same as that referred to in Sangitaratnakara.[9] In Kerala music, the raga ‘Indala’ is the janyam of Kharaharapiya, having rishabha and dhaivata as varjya swar. The arohana and avarohana being sgmpns–snpmgs which is the same as sangeetaratnakara. But in Kerala, ‘Daivata’ is used in arohana in rare sancharas. This raga is found to be the same as the ancient tamil isai “Indalam”, having madhyama as moorchana swara.[10]

The rasa depicted is “soka rasa”. On an examination of all the pieces in this raga, I came to the conclusion that “Indola” of Kathakali and the “Indolaka” mentioned in Sangeetaratnakara by Sarangadeva, are the same as the ‘Indolam’ of the ancient Tamil tevarams. The lakshanas of the ragas and swaras are found to be the same. Thus it is clear that the ancient ‘Indalam’ is preserved even now, only in the sopanam music of Kerala and vanished away from the reservoirs of soth Travancore music.

### 1.2 PURANEERAM

“Puraneeram “which is otherwise known as nerthiram is the 21<sup>st</sup> pan of 103 groups of ancient Tamil pans.[11]

According to the manuscripts Thiruvameduthurai, the raga ‘puraneermai’ is equivalent to the raga srikandi whose arohana avarohana are sgmpdn – sndpmgs. The swara used for this raga are shadja, sadharana gandhara, pratimadhyama, panchama, chaturvathi dhaivatha and kaisiki nishada. These swaras occurring the 46<sup>th</sup> mela “shadwatha margini.” Hence, we can say that it is a shadava janya derived from the 46<sup>th</sup> mela.

In sangeetha chandrika, the raga puraneermai is described as the janyam of “Rag Qthamsa” mela (sankarabharanam) with sampoorana arohana and avarohana. [11]

If we examine the form of this raga as sung in Tevarams at present, we find that ‘Puraneermai’ is sung as ‘Bhupala’ having arohana and avarohana as srpds – sdprgs.

Shri T. Lakshmanan Pillai, in his “Essays on south Indian ragas” has made mention of This raga “puraneer” is equivalent to Bhoopala and Revagupti. [13]

Thus we find that the raga ‘puraneermai’ has been interpreted in different forms by different scholars of music. But on a close scrutiny of this raga, as used in the kathakali music of Kerala, we find that this raga is an admixture of all the different aspects of “puraneermai” that we found above.

In some Kathakali padams, prayogas like “p n1 d2 d p m” and m g2 g2 r2 rg g 1 \_\_\_s” give the chhaya of the “puraneermai” raga in the manuscript. Also rare prayogas like s s r2 m g2 m p – drive us to the conclusion that it is the janyam of sankarabharanam (ragothamsam) as mentioned in sangeetha chandrika.

Hence we can presume that the present “puraneer” raga which is used in Kerala music is closely allied to the ancient “puraneermai”, in many of the sancharas though we do not find the use of Pratimadhyama here at all, and not the present ‘puraneermai’ used in Tevaram music which resembles Bhoopalam. The emotional effect is bhakti rasa and the raga gives smoothening effect.

### 1.3 INNISA

Indisa is presently considered as an exclusively Kerala raga. This raga is not used in any other part of India. We do not find this included in any of the raga classifications, except the Tevaram pans. [14] The name must have come down from the ancient Dravidian raga called “Innisai”.

This “Innisa” in Tamil must be the same as the ‘Indisa’ of Kerala music. But definitions of this Innisa’ raga is not given.

The notes taken are chatushruti rishabha, sadharana gandhara, sudhamadhyama, panchama, sudha dhaivata, kaisiki nishadha. In prayogas like rg g s. The notes are that of Natabhairavi [15]

On examining, we find that use of the following notes – shadja, chatushruti rishabha, sadharana gandhara, sudha madhyama, panchama, chatushruti dhaivata, kaisiki

nishada. Hence this rare raga can be taken as a Bhashanga raga coming under Kharaharapriya, with sudha dhaivata as the foreign note. The rasa depicted seems to be sringara, as all the compositions deal with theme of love.

### 1.4 KHANDARAM

The term ‘khandaram’ must have been derived from gandharam of ancient tamil music. In the group of ancient Dravidian pans. [16] Gandhara pan occurs the 33<sup>rd</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup> pans (both in palaiazhthiram and Kurinjyazhthiram). [17]

In ‘Yazhnool’ we find that this is described as the janyam of “Chempalai” (Harikamboji). It is a shadava raga, varjya swara being dhaivata. Hence the arohana and avarohana are s r2 g2 m p n, s s n p m g rs, ... According to venkitamakhi classification. The khandarava comes as a janya of both the 2<sup>nd</sup> mela Ratnangi and also the 20<sup>th</sup> mela Natabhairavi. Here the raga appears as an audava sampoorana raga under the 2<sup>nd</sup> mela having the arohana and avarohana as s g m p n s. s n d p m g r s. It is considered as shadava sampoorana raga under the 20<sup>th</sup> mela with the arohana and avarohana as s rs g m p n s – s n d p m g rs.

In sangeetha chandrika “Khandara” raga is defined as the janyam of the 47<sup>th</sup> Raktimela (kharaharapriya) having the arohana and avarohana d n s g rg m p d p n d n s – s n d p m g rs. [18]

This gandhara raga does not exist in the Tevarams at present. But instead we get the gandhara panchama raga which is usually sung as Kedaragowla and also “piyanti gandhara” which is sung as sankarabharanam or navarog by the Tevaram musicians.

But if we examine the ‘Khandara raga’ as used in the Kathakali padams of Kerala music, we find that this raga bears rare resemblance to all the above mentioned versions of the same. A song in “Khandara raga” from “saindhava vadha” set to muriyadanta (Tisra chappu tala) [19] explains it.

Here the notes taken are Shadja, Chatushruti rishabha, sadharana gandhara and kaisiki nishadha.

In another piece from “duryodhana vadham” kathakali, [10] it is sung as a sloka.

The swaras used here are shadja, chatushruti rishabha, sadharana gandhara, sudha madhyama, panchama, sudha daivata, chatushruti dhaivata, and kaisiki nishada. The

arohana and avarohana being, srm pns – sn d p m g rs. Thus we see that the “Khantara” raga which is used in Kerala music can be said to be the janyam of Natabhairavi.[11] The swara combinations taken are such that they produce the maximum soka rasa. It is a bhashanga raga.

### 1.5 PADI

Padi is a rare raga. But it cannot be considered as an old raga as well. It is of late origin. Venkitamakhi has made mention of this raga as a janyam of the 15<sup>th</sup> mela mayamalawa gowla. It is an audava shadava raga with arohana and avarohana as s r l m p s – s n p d l, p m r l s.[11]

In sangeetha chandrika also padi raga is described as janyam of (Gadha mela) mayamalawagowla, with arohana and avarohana as s r m p d p n s – s n p d p m rs.

The varjya swara is gandhara.[13] But padi raga as it appears in the music of Kerala, has an entirely different form.

If we examine the music of the North as well as the south Kerala we find that Padi is sung as a janyam of “Harikamboji”. In “Duryodhana vadha” Kathakali, padi raga is sung as a sloka[14] but little fast.

From the swara prayoga, arohana and avarohana can be deduced as s rg m p d s- sd p m g rs. Though it resembles Kambhoji, the ragabhava is more of Kedaragoula. These aspects of the Kerala padi raga is quite contradictory to those of the padi mentioned by Venkitamakhi. In Kerala, the padi raga is sung with so many special prayogas like rg — g r-r- which sounds like Kedaragoula. Also d^g d^s d^s – d^p – g^p g^p g^p g^r- s (shortening the notes) and prayogas like d ds – s p p n – n (lengthening of notes)<sup>25</sup>. These reveal the characteristics of the sopana style of singing the padi raga. The sudden change of octave from purva Madhya sthayi to purva taara sthayi is also another noteworthy point. The notes used are Chatusra rishabhm, antara gandhara, sudha madhyamam, panchamam, Chatusruti dhaivatham and kaisiki nishadham. Though notes are that of kambhoji, it differs because of the characteristic pidippus (ranjaka prayogas)

### 1.6 KANAKURINJI

This is not found in ancient Dravidian raga classifications or in latter classifications of ragas by eminent scholars of music. Venkitamakhi mentions a raga called Kannada

kurinji which has no resemblance to the raga at all.[16] Kannadakurinji is the janyam of 49<sup>th</sup> mela Dhavalambari, taking Shadja, sudha rishabha, Antara gandhara, Prati madhyama, panchama, sudha dhaivata and sudha nishadha. It is described as a sampurna audava raga with swara “ni” and “ga” varjya in avarohana.

Therefore the arohana and avarohana are s (g) rg m p d n s – s d p m rs.[17]

The only resemblance I found is in the name which ends with Kurinji.

In sangeetha chandrika, Shri Attoor Krishna pisharody has given the definition of Kanakurinji thus – “sa griha nyasa ga ma pa dams-

*Varoha ri vakra ganakurangi.”*

It is said to be the janyam of Ragothamsa mela (sankarabharanam). He further states ‘that this raga takes shadja as griha and nyasa swara. Ga, Ma Pa and Da are the amsa swara. In the avarohana Ri is vakra. He calls this raga “Ganakurangi” which is stated to be the same as Kanakurinji. It is an upanga raga; the arohana and avarohana being s rg m p d, s – s n d p m g rg s. The notes taken are shadja, chatusruti rishabha, antara gandhara, shudha madhyama., panchama, chatusruti dhaivata, and kaakali nishadha.

The prayoga pratimadhyamam is the special feature in certain compositions. Thus on examining various songs, I found that there are two modes of singing this raga “Kanakurinji”. In both the That pratimadhyamam might have come in as a foreign note or it might have been introduced there by incorrect interpreters. When we examine the other songs we find that it has mostly the chhaya of sankarabharanam and in the peculiar prayogas we find that “ma” is given a shake which we come across in Neelambari which is also a janyam of sankarabharanam., or is sankarabharanam itself, with a different name.

### 1.7 MARADHANASI

Maradhanasi is also a raga of the later origin. We do not find this raga in the Tamil pans. In venkitamakhis raga classifications, this raga “maruvadhanasi” is said to be a janya of the 22<sup>nd</sup> melakarta Kharaharapriya.[18] The arohana and avarohana being s g m p d n (d p m p n) – s n d p m ( d m ) g rs. The swaras used are shadja, chatusruti rishabha, sadharana gandhara, sudha

madhyama, panchama, chatushruti dhaivatha and kaisiki nishadha. In the arohana rishabha is varjya. So it is a shadava sampurna raga.

In the sangeetha chandrika also, this “maradhanaasi” raga is classified under the rakti mela (kharaharapriya). [19] The arohana and avarohana are s g m p d n d s - s n d p m d p m g r s -. Here in arohana Ni is vakra and in avarohana Da and Pa are combined vakra swara. It is an upanga raga. Shadja is the griha and nyasa swara and madhyama is the amsa swara.

A slightly different arohana and avarohana for this raga is seen in the book “a key to hindu music” by B. Chitti Babu Naidu. Here this raga is referred as a janyam of Kharaharapriya having the arohana and avarohana n s s g m p d s - s n d p m d g r s (page 104).

These are the different interpretations of the maradhanasi raga. In kathakali we find that although this raga is used as a janyam of Kharaharapriya, we meet with the sudha dhaivatha prayoga very often. It has got very great resemblance to Karnatic Dhanyasi in the uthara group of the swara. We find the use of the chaturasra rishabha only in the second half of the avarohana prayoga. A verse of a song in “Maradhanaasi” raga from “Nalacharitam” Kathakali set to chembada [30] explains that the swaras used are shadja, chatushruti rishabha, sadharana gandhara, sudha madhyama, panchama, sudha dhaivatha, and kaisiki nishadha. Although the raga chhaya is that of the Dhanasi raga of the Karnatic music, yet there is difference in the prayoga of rishabha. In Maradhanasi, the rishabha used is chatushruti rishabha. But some modern singers sing Maradhanaasi like Dhanasi. In my opinion, I feel that it should be taken as a bhashanga raga, using both the rishabhas. It can be classified under Hanumatodi or Kharaharapriya.

### 1.8 SAMANTHAMALAHARI

The samanthamalahari raga which we find in the music of Kerala seems to be a very rare raga; we do not come across this raga in any classification. We find a reference to a raga called Samata mallaru in venkitamakhi’s raga classification. “Samata mallaru” which takes the arohana and avarohana are s g m p n s - s n (p) d m g r s, is the janyam of the 17<sup>th</sup> melakartha sooryakantham<sup>31</sup>.

In kathakali, we get a very few pieces of them and is sung with the chhaya of Neelambari. There is a song in

Samanta Malahari from “Bali Vijayam” Kathakali<sup>32</sup> set to Tripuda detailing it.

Though in Kathakali, we have a separate Neelambari raga, on examining the samanthamalahari, we find the same notes and the same prayogas used right through<sup>33</sup>. We do not find the use of sudha rishabha of Venkitamakhi’s samanthamalahari, here at all. This Samantha malahari is exactly like neelambari, without its Kaisiki nishadha prayoga and the mode of singing is exactly the same as Neelambari. The only difference I can make out is that the Kaisiki nishadha prayoga, which is not used in Samanthamalahari. Hence, it can be called as an upanga coming under the Melakartha of Sankarabharanam whereas Neelambari is a bhashanga coming under the same group.

### 1.9 GOPIKA VASANTHAM

Gopika vasantham is an important raga in Kathakali music. It is a very beautiful raga with its peculiar graces and embellishments. It is supposed to be the janyam of Natabhairavi with the arohana and avarohana as s r g m p d p n n s - s n d p m g r m g s. [34] On examination of this raga, gandhara and also kaisiki nishadha, Kairali nishadha and kakali nishadha are all used. Hence it may be a bhashanga raga. The dhalu and Gumbhita sort of gamakas are used in the peculiar pidippus of this raga. This raga has a tinge of sadness about it, which add to its beauty. The devotional appeal is very great.

In sangeetha chandrika, this raga is described as the janyam of Ratna mela (Natabhairavi) having the arohana and avarohana as s r g m p d p n s - s n d p m g r m g s. [35] Rishabha is the griha swara. Shadja is the nyasa swara. Gandhara, Madhyama and panchama the Amsa swar In arohana Da is vakra and in avarohana the vakra swara is rishabha. It is a bhashanga raga.

Here under is given a song of Sri Swati Tirunal in Gopika Vasantha raga which is supposed to have been composed towards the end of his life. [36]

### 2. Talas of South Travancore state

The people of Kerala in general have a better sense of rhythm and tala than the others of south India. The reason may be traced to their long association with chenda mela. Similarly, South Travancore has given emphasis to Tala more than raga. Many of these talas are found even now in Kathakali padams but many of them have vanished from the musical system of South Travancore.

In Karnatic music we have only Tisram, Chatusram, Khandam, Misram, Sankirnam laghus, while in Travancore music, there are laghus with 2,6 and 8 aksharakalas too which are found in Vadakkan pattus. Jhampa tala is the only one found with anudrutam and it is met often in Kerala talas. [37]

Since the music of Kerala is mainly based on the principle of meters, tala avarta is adjusted according to the number of syllables constituting a single line of a song. The talas were reckoned by drutam and anudrutams and a few of them were named after the number of their beats eg.

*Eka tala - 1 beat*  
*Munnam tala - 3 beat*  
*Ezham tala - 7 beat*  
*Pathukol - 10 beats and*  
*Pathimoonnu kol - 13 beats. Etc. [38]*

The present day Karnatic talas owe their origin to Purandara dasa who systemized the saptha talas and the thirty five talas. [39] Chappu tala is also used to a larger extent in Karnatic systems. An intensive research into the tala system of Kerala will convince that besides the various talas that are in use in Karnatic music, there are ever so many new talas in Kerala systems.

Syncopation is also used to a very great extent. We find constant use of drutam and anudrutam and mostly emphasis is laid on the second syllable. Several aksharakalas are expressed in nishhabdha kriya.

The tala are made to suit the purpose of the meter. Though the tune of most of the songs may be simple, their charm is exhibited due to the rhythmical construction. Some rare talas are Kumbha, Kundanachi, Marma, Karika, Lakshmi, Kochu lakshmi, Ganapathi etc. [40]

### 2.1 Karika talam

This tala has four angas - 3 anudrutams and a drutam. Kunjan Nambiar has defined about Karika as "laghu laghu laghu guru yute karika tala. [41]

According to the principle of tala pramanam, the time values of anudrutam, drutam, laghu, guru and plutam, and their angas marked are:

U = 1 anudrutam = ¼ matra = 1 aksharakala  
 0 = 1 drutam = ½ matra = 2 aksharakala  
 1 = I laghu = 1 matra = 4 aksharakala  
 ॐ = 1 guru = 2 matra = 8 aksharakala

ॐ = 1 plutam = 3 matra = 12 aksharakala  
 But the time value of one laghu as described in the principle of metre is the time taken for pronouncing one Hriswakshara which will be equivalent to 1 aksharakala of the tala pramana system. Bearing this in mind we can mark the comparative aksharakala time values of the metrical system and the tala pramana as follows:-

As per metre	As per tala pramana
¼ matra = U = 1 anudrutam	= ¼ aksharakala = 1 aksharakala
½ matra = 0 = drutam	= ½ aksharakala = 2 aksharakala
1 matra = 1 = laghu	= 1 aksharakala = 4 aksharakala
2 matra = ॐ = guru	= 2 aksharakala = 10 aksharakala
3 matra = ॐ	
= plutam	= 3 aksharakala = 12 aksharakala

Therefore we can mark Karika talam as:

Laghu + laghu + laghu + guru = 5 matras = 1 aksharakala + 1 aksharakala + 1 aksharakala + 2 aksharakala

Converting this to tala pramana, we get 1 anudrutam, I anudrutam, I anudrutam and I drutam = "UUU0"

98<sup>th</sup> karika tala mentioned in 108 tala scheme is different from the Kerala tala. It has 9 aksharakala and expressed as 000UU. So they are not same.

### 2.2 Kirida talam

"0/3" = 1 drutam and I laghu with 3 angas. = "0 ॐ"

This can be classified as the 47<sup>th</sup> tala of 108 tala group mentioned in tala dipika. [41] This may also be called tisra rupakam of the 35 tala of Karnatic paralance and could be called as khanda chapu also, because of the syncopation the emphasis falls on the 2<sup>nd</sup> beat of the tala, rather than on the first beat.

### 2.3 PanCakarika talam

"U U U U 0"

It has 5 beats and a visarjitha. In some of the ancient songs of Kerala, such as Ammanapattu we come across this tala. [43]

This tala is not seen in Travancore compositions often.

### 2.4 Pan Cari talam

"0/4"

This is same as chatusra roopakam of 35 tala group. [44] This is called panCari talam in Kathakali music.

This is a very commonly found tala of South Travancore compositions.

## 2.5 Cempada talam

“/4 0 0”

This can be classified as the chatusra triputa tala(adi tala) of the 35 tala group.[45] In the kathakali music this tala is known as Cempada talam.It has 3 angas ie 1 chatusra laghu and 2 drutam.It bears resemblance to the 36<sup>th</sup> “dwiteeyakam” of the 108 tala group mentioned in taladipika[46] and also to the 40<sup>th</sup> pratitala of the other 108 group this is the most commonly found tala in South Travancore compositions especially in temple traditional music.

The eight aksharakala Cempada tala is sometimes reckoned in tisra jathi as well.

## 2.6Kundanachi talam

“U00U000”

This tala consisting of 7 anga is a peculiartala, which is found only in Kerala music.In Kerala,this tala is known by the name Kundanachi talam<sup>47</sup>.This tala does not come under 35 tala or 108 tala groups.Kunjan Nambiar,in his “Haraneeswayamvaram” seethankan thullal has described this tala as follows[48]:

*“sadruta laghu dwayi sa druta laghu trayi pinpadha  
Sa druta laghu dwayi pinne sadrutam plutham  
Panthirandu matrayithinnu, pandu kalpitha ningane”*

This tala is said to be of 12 metres, according to the principle of metres.

In the metrical system 1 laghu is the time taken for pronouncing 1 hrishwakshara kala, which is equal to 1 aksharakala of the talapramanam.Hence the time values of the metrical system and the tala pramana.Hence the time value of the metrical system and the tala pramana can be marked thus.

U = 1 anudrutam = ¼ matra = 1 aksharakala

0 = 1 drutam = ½ matra = 2 aksharakala

1 = I laghu = 1 matra = 4 aksharakala

३ = 1 guru = 2 matra = 8 aksharakala

३ = 1 plutam = 3 matra = 12 aksharakala

Thus, according to metrical system, tala can be noted down as:

1 druta 2 laghu 1 druta 3 laghu 1 druta 3 laghu 1 druta 1 pluta  
=

1 aksharakala+ 2 aksharakala + ½ aksharakala + 3 aksharakala + ½ aksharakala + 2 aksharakala + ½ aksharakala + 3 aksharakala = 12 aksharakalas = 12 matras.

But since 1 aksharakala of the metrical system corresponds to 1 anudrutam of the talapraanam, 1/2 aksharakala of metrical system cannot be included in the angas of talapramanam.Hence in order to mark the angas of the tala,we have to double the time value of the tala. So,It comes out like:

1 aksharakala + 4 aksharakala + 1 aksharakala + 1 aksharakala + 1 aksharakala + 4 aksharakala + 1 aksharakala + 6 aksharakala =

U 0 0 U 000 U 00 U 000 = 24

Thus the resultant tala we get by taking ½ of this is “U00U000” which is kundanachi tala of Kerala music.

## 2.7 Marma tala

“0U0UU0UUU0”

Here the tala consist of 10 angas.i.e

1 drutam + 1 anudrutam + 1 drutam + 2 anudrutam + 1 drutam + 3 anudrutam + 1 drutam.In Kerala,this tala is known as Marma tala.In the telugu manuscript called “raga tala chintamani” of 17<sup>th</sup> century[49], a few rare talas are mentioned besides the 124 talas and Marma tala is one among them.Following are the rare tala mentioned in the manuscript:

1. Namavali
2. Kundara janhjata
3. Jaya mukam
4. **Marmaka**
5. Bhadra banam
6. Ghana natyam
7. Jaya sribhakara natyam
8. Prakriti mdhyaka
9. Dig vijayam
10. Khanta varnam
11. Bhinna chatureekan
12. Trimatra





2 matra = 1 drutam = 0

4 matra = 1 laghu = 1

Thus we get,

$1 \underline{2} \underline{\frac{1}{2}} \underline{\frac{1}{2}} 1 \underline{2} 1 1 \underline{\frac{1}{2}} \underline{\frac{1}{2}} 1 \underline{\frac{1}{2}} 1 \underline{\frac{1}{2}} \underline{\frac{1}{2}} \underline{\frac{1}{2}} 1 1 1 1 1 =$   
 U U 0 U U 0 U U U U U 0 U U /4

Hence according to the tala system this 20 aksharakala tala can be marked as “U U 0 U U 0 U U U U 0 U U /4”.

This tala is sometimes referred with particular nemonies also, as thus.

“thi thi tha thikuthi tha thitha thikutha thithaitha thikuti tha”this is the tala swarupam. [57]

= U U 0 U U 0 0000/4

This tala is one of the oldest which must have been in vogue during the time of ancient Dravidians. These are some of the popular talas found in South Travancore, which were collected and sorted by me from various collections of folklore and traditional songs I did.

An interesting remark about these talas is that they have all the three varieties of eduppu[58] i.e. sama, anagatha and athitha with  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}$  and  $\frac{3}{4}$  edams in anagatha and  $\frac{1}{2}$  and  $\frac{3}{4}$  edams in athitha in rendering. [59]

I cannot conclude better without expressing the feeling that South Travancore music is a vast ocean and many treasures are still burried within. I could analyze and compare some of them to a certain extent but I would invite aspirants to hunt for many more as there was hardly any research project focusing on this section from old south Travancore.

### Footnotes

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