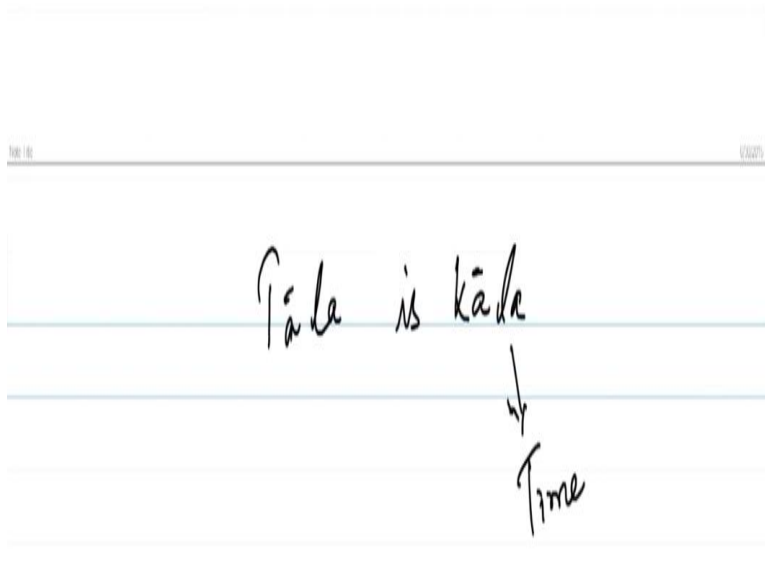


Appreciating Carnatic Music
Dr. Lakshmi Sreeram
Indian Institute of Technology, Madras

Lecture -35
Aspects of Tala II

We are trying to understand tala and we saw in the last session, examples of a few prominent talas. I also suggested, in the last session that though tala is translated as rhythm or rhythmic face set of carnatic music. Tala is really not rhythm, I mean it is not happy translation, so what is tala? In a extremely erudite paper Dr. Premlatha Sharma eminent musicologist, she suggested that tala is actually kala. Tala is kala what does this mean now; kala means time.

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So tala is actually a certain duration of time, that is rendered in or that is signified by hand gestures. And this cycle, this duration is repeated cyclically. So Adhi tala is “1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8” this duration “1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8” this kala. This duration of time was rendered by these hand gestures “1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8” that is tala. And this is cyclical, it is something that repeats until the end of the composition. So each composition is fitted into the tala cycle of this kind.

It has been persistable observed that tala derives from poetic meet up. The concept, the tala itself has a musical concept, it is something that is associated or is drawn from poetic meet up. Whereas rhythm, something that is associated with dance that has come from dance. So we can have a rhythm of “1,2,3”, “1,2,3” something that you can feel in your body, something that you

can sway to, very rarely can you really tap your feet to a piece of Indian classical music. That kind of rhythm, rhythmic aspect is not easily found in Indian classical music.

The kind of rhythm that you tap your feet to or that you can sway your body, that kind of rhythm is not really associated with Indian classical music. What is that the temporal dimension of temporal discipline of Indian music is brought in by tala, which has more connection with, which is connected, rather with poetry or poetic meet up rather than dance? It has been said apparently that you can be a good western classical musician.

If you know your alphabets from a to g those are the notes and you can be good musician. If you know your numbers from 1 to 4. Those are the kind of rhythms, that you can find in most of the kinds of music, fours and threes which are simpler and smaller numbers. Now Indian classical music, whether it is Hindustani or carnatic especially carnatic music, carnatic music is particularly noted for its immense rhythmic complexity.

Even a beginner is initiated in two things far more complex than 3 and 4. Lets watch this clip now this is a clip in which a simple Aroha and Avaroha is sung. But there is something that happens, which is for you to try and figure out what is happening. We will talk about it little later in this session. So let us listen to a rendition of a simple Aroha and Avaroha of Mayamalavagowla and a certain rhythmic variety, which is introduced.

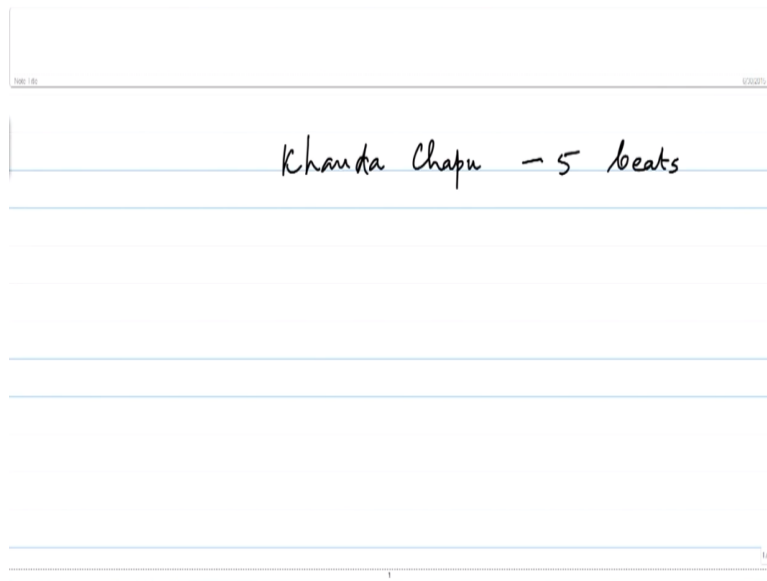
(Singing Starts: 05:40) (Singing Ends: 06:41) So we ended last session with small exercise, for you I sang a few songs, few compositions, parts of a few compositions and left it to you to try and figure out, what the tala is. Now this is not trivial to figure out the tala cycle, if you just hear the song. And this is another point, that should make it of that, tala is different from rhythm in any western song or film song.

You can easily make out the rhythm, you will be able to make out the rhythm. But you cannot make out the tala of the composition of carnatic music. It is not trivial, unless you have some initiation in carnatic music. Let us quickly go over to those three compositions, that I sang and I will tell you, what tala is.

Those composition, wherein the first composition was (Singing Starts: 7:55) (Singing Ends: 09:04), this was Rupaka Talam. (Singing Starts: 9.36) (Singing Ends: 09:49) this was Adhi,(Singing Starts: 10.10) (Singing Ends: 10:41) “1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8”; “1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8”; this is Misra Chapu Talam.

These three are one among the, one of the most prominent tala, that I used another variety of Chaputala is also very commonly encountered. Misra Chapu Talam is a cycle of 7 beats, the other variety of Chaputala is a cycle of 5 beats and is called Khanda Chapu.

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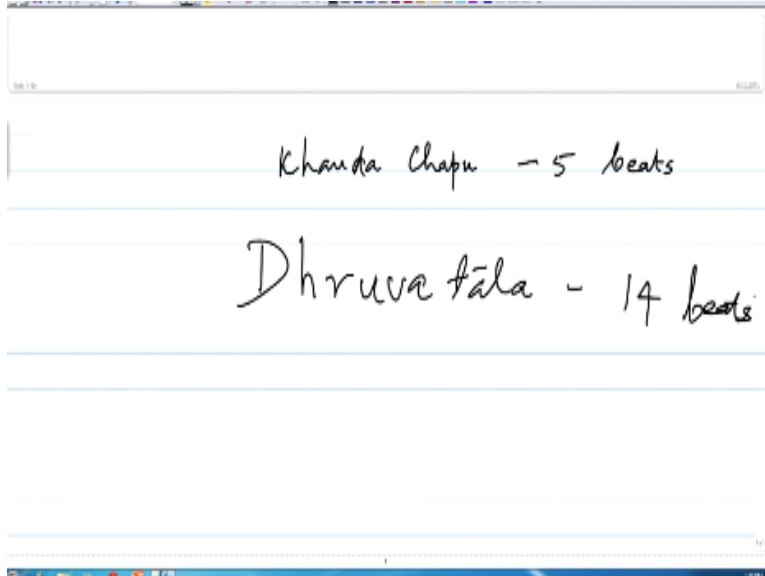


Khanda chapu is other variety of Chaputala and this is also commonly encountered like that and is rendered in as “1,2,3,4,5”, “1,2,3,4,5”,” 1,2,3,4,5” (Singing Starts: 11:35) (Singing Ends:12:48) this is khanda chapu a cycle of 5 beats. Now I will sing a composition and try to follow the tala cycle and see what you make out of it (Singing Starts: 13:06) (Singing Ends: 14:54).

This if you would have made out is a cycle of fourteen beats, it goes like this (Singing Starts: 15:04) (Singing Ends: 15:28) that is one cycle one Avartana. Remember the cycle of particular

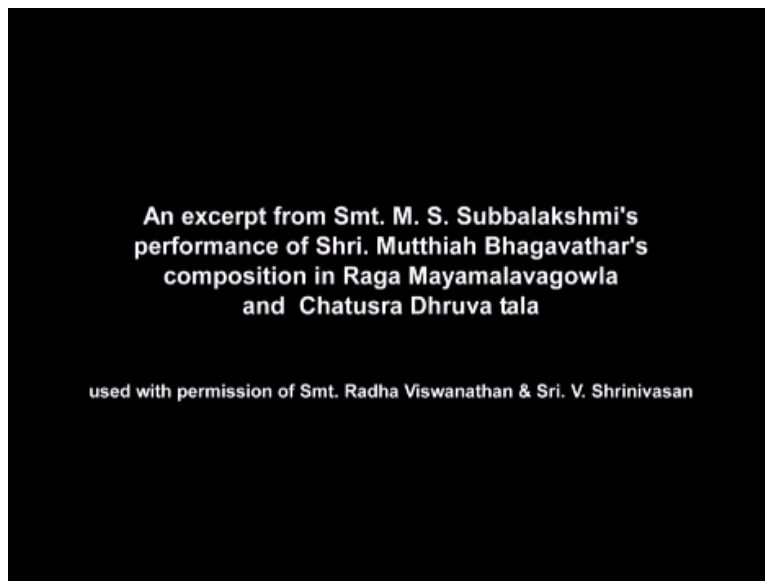
cycle of tala is Avartana or Avartha and this tala has a cycle of 14 beats. We saw that Adhi tala has 8 beats, Rupaka tala has 6, Misra Chapu Talam 7 and Khanda Chapu has 5.

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And those are really, the very commonly used talas in carnatic music. Now we have found talas like this, also the one I just performed and this is called Dhruva tala. And when you have a duration, as long as these 14 beats “1,2,3” and so on. And you can very well see, why there is a need of an external reference, like what we do by this hand gestures.

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(Music Starts: 16:50) (Music Ends: 22:20)

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Suggested reading for Tala.

1. <http://www.carnatica.net/sangeet/layanubhava1.htm>

2. A Karnatic Primer by P. Sriram, Pages 18, 19
<http://www.ae.iitm.ac.in/~sriram/karpri.pdf>

3. Tala - A Conceptual and Structural Analysis by
N. Ramanathan in Music Research

<http://www.musicresearch.in/categorydetails.php?imgid=115>