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Mrdarigam mind: The tani avartanam in Karnāṭak music.
(Volumes I–III)

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Wesleyan University, 1991

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MRDANGAM MIND:
THE TANI ĀVARTANAM IN KARNATAK MUSIC
VOLUME I: TEXT AND ANALYSIS

by

David Paul Nelson

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ABSTRACT

The tani āvartanam, or drum solo, has become within the last century an essential feature of the kaccheri, as the full concert of modern Karnāṭak music is known. The solo drumming of mṛdaṅgām players has developed into an extremely sophisticated art that has been largely ignored by Indian musicologists; thus there has been, until now, virtually no written material on the subject. This work is a step toward correcting that lack of documentation.

The material herein was gathered from videotaped performances and interviews with the following mṛdaṅgām masters: Vellore G. Ramabhadrān, T. K. Murthy, Karaikudi R. Mani, Palghat R. Raghū, and Trichy S. Sankaran. Following a preliminary interview, each of them performed a tani āvartanam in the same tālam (renḍu kāḷai ādi tālam) and in the same song. In a subsequent interview with each drummer, we listened to and discussed his solo.

Upon my return from India, I transcribed all the interviews and solos. These transcriptions comprise volumes II and III respectively. Volume I begins with a general introduction to the elements of the tani āvartanam, with particular attention to the cadential forms known as kōrvai and mōrā. This was designed to be accessible to anyone with a working knowledge of the fundamental concepts of Karnāṭak music. Following this introduction is a detailed analysis of each of the five solos. The analyses, transcriptions and interview transcripts are linked with a videotape of all five solos by means of time codes to enable the
reader to approach the music from any point of view, including simple watching/listening.

The solos in this study range from eleven to twenty-five minutes in duration and represent a broad range of styles. The drummers who participated include students of Palghat Mani Iyer, Palani Subramania Pillai, and Tanjore Vaidyanatha Iyer, although two of them were taught by much less famous masters. All five are considered to be at the top of the profession; thus this study may be taken as an accurate survey of the state of the tani āvartanam in Karnataka music as of 1991.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The musicians who contributed to this study, Vellore G. Ramabhadran, T. K. Murthy, Karaikudi R. Mani, Palghat R. Raghu, and Trichy S. Sankaran, provided so much more than information that I wish to express my deep gratitude to all of them. In addition, I received valuable and generous support from V. Tyagarajan and his brother V. Nagarajan, who eased many pathways for me in the complicated musical world of Madras. The singer for four of the five videotapes, D. K. Jayaraman, who recently passed away, was also a great help. I join the Madras music community in mourning the loss of this great musician. Among many others in Madras without whose help I could not have managed are T. Sankaran, Smt. Jayalakshmi, Mr. and Mrs. G. Sridharan, and Messrs. T. T. Vasu and T. S. Parthasarathi of the Music Academy.

The following people served as videographers for the ten interviews contained in this study, and I wish to thank them here: Marcie Frishman, J. Vaidyanathan, Jamie Haddad, Douglas MacKenzie, and Victor Chandler. For help in translating the interviews with T. K. Murthy, I am indebted to P. George Mathew of Amherst College.

The field work for this study was done with the support of a Junior Fellowship awarded by the American Institute of Indian Studies for the year I spent in Madras, June 1987-June 1988, which I gratefully acknowledge.
On this side, I wish to thank many more people than I could possibly list in a small space. In particular, I wish to express my deep gratitude to Dr. T. Viswanathan, who has put up with a great deal over the years in order to give me opportunities to play in the “big leagues”. I am no less grateful to Dr. David Reck, who has, since 1971, encouraged me at every stage of my development as a performer, and now as a scholar, of Karnāṭak music.

Last, but hardly least, my deep thanks to Kim. We both know I couldn’t have done it without you.
Preface

The tani āvartanam, or drum solo, is an indispensable feature of any kaccheri, as the full concert of Karnāṭak music is called. Within the concert structure, the tani emerges smoothly from the end of the svara kalpana of the main piece, moves through a logical progression of stages, and re-enters the kriti as smoothly as it emerged. One might reasonably assume that it has always been an important part of the concert structure. The paradoxical truth is that it seems, at least in its present form, to be a phenomenon of the last hundred years. One might also assume that such a highly developed system of rhythmic functioning would have been accounted for, in one way or another, by musicologists. Again paradoxically, it has been ethnomusicologists, Indian and non-Indian, who have approached not only drumming, but all the improvisational aspects of Karnāṭak music.

Indian musicologists have, as a rule, confined their analyses of modern Karnāṭak music to melodic and textual considerations. Mrdāṅgam playing, whether as accompaniment or as solo, seems to have developed into an enormously complex phenomenon without any serious attempt on the part of Indian scholars to analyze it. The performers, on the other hand, are much more interested in the flow of musical ideas than in the analysis of them. Their main concern, like that of the characters on Keats' urn, is whether a composition or motivic idea is 'beautiful' and 'true'. It is not that that they do not 'think' about what they do, nor that they cannot or will not talk about it. They do, they can,
and, in the appropriate situation, as in the interviews that make up part of this study, they will.

As Robert Brown’s ground-breaking 1965 dissertation revealed to non-Indian musicologists for the first time, the structure of the mṛdaṅgam lessons in any given tālam, or rhythmic setting, is essentially a tani āvartanam in paradigm form. Once the basic ‘ta di tom nam’ lessons have been completed and the ādi tāla lessons have begun, the mṛdaṅgam student is always learning material that could be applied to the solo. Accompaniment, on the other hand, is considered extremely difficult to teach, and to this day is learned primarily by example and absorption. Naturally, one’s teacher may be consulted on details of any subject, depending on the relative closeness of the relationship.

Nobody knows with any certainty the number of generations of mṛdaṅgam, kanjira, and gatam students that have been trained according to this solo paradigm. This would certainly make an interesting study, as would the relationship between the developments of the tavil and mṛdaṅgam traditions. Such studies would require a great deal of detective work, as well as the compiling of many oral histories. This is clearly beyond the scope of the present work. Since Brown’s is virtually the only available work on the subject worthy of citing, it was necessary, though hardly painful, for me to go to the living, breathing sources of knowledge about the tani āvartanam, the drummers themselves.
Whatever the form of the drum solo might have been in earlier times, there is general agreement among mṛdaṅgam players at present that the current highly-developed state of the percussive arts in South India is almost entirely the result of the efforts of two men, Palghat Mani Iyer (1912-1981) and Palani Subramania Pillai (1908-1962). These two giants, contemporaries and frequent collaborators, by all accounts raised the mṛdaṅgam from its previous status as a strictly time-keeping accompaniment instrument, to an entirely new level of sophistication both in accompaniment and in solo playing. This study is a survey of five approaches to the tani āvartanam as it is today.

All five drummers whose work is analyzed in this study have been deeply influenced by the work of both these artists. Two of them, Palghat R. Raghu and Trichy S. Sankaran, are direct disciples of Mani Iyer and Subramania Pillai respectively. One, T. K. Murthy, studied with the same teacher as Mani Iyer; their time as students overlapped considerably. Vellore G. Ramabhadran heard both masters frequently, and consciously uses elements of both their approaches. Karaikudi R. Mani, thwarted in his childhood desire to study with Palghat Mani Iyer, has absorbed aspects of both styles and synthesized them into some entirely new approaches to composition.

These five artists were not chosen at random. They are, as of 1991, generally regarded as among the very finest living drummers. There is only one other drummer in the same class, Umayalpuram K. Sivaraman, who did not feel that my approach suited him, and so declined my invitation to participate. While
his contribution would have been extremely valuable, it was not essential to an
effective survey of the current state of the solo art.

The structure of my approach in gathering the material analyzed in this
study had three stages. In the first stage, I conducted a preliminary interview
with each drummer, which was videotaped. The subject of the preliminary
interview was the artist's general development as a mridangam player, from his
early training to his rise as a concert artist. I did not go into these interviews with
lists of specific questions, since my primary interest was to find out what each
artist had to say about himself. Transcripts of the five interviews, edited for
smooth reading, are included in Volume II.

The second stage, also videotaped, was a concert performance, including
a tani āvartanam. In order to provide as similar a context as possible for all five
solos, I tried to organize the performances so that the same singer, D. K.
Jayaraman, and the same violinist, V. Tyagarajan, would perform the same kṛti,
Kaligiyunte, in Kiravani rāga and ādi tāla. While it was possible to use the
same song in all five cases, the circumstances differed slightly.

First of all, it was not possible to record Trichy Sankaran's performance in
India, and therefore Sankaran's solo is not in a performance of D. K.
Jayaraman's but rather in a public concert by T Viswanathan, recorded at
Buckley Recital Hall, Amherst College, on October 1, 1989.
Second, for a variety of reasons, it was not possible to record all four of the remaining concerts in the same way. Three of the performances were in privately arranged concerts. Murthy and Ramabhadran were recorded at the home of a generous friend, Mrs Jayalakshmi, at 11 Bishop's Garden, in Madras. Mani was recorded at Sastri Hall, according to his wish. Palghat Raghu was recorded in a public concert at the Anandapadmanavasami temple in Adyar, as part of a celebration in honor of Tanjore Vaidyanatha Iyer, the guru of Mani Iyer and Murthy. This concert, alone among the five, featured a second percussionist, the gatam player Suresh. A videotape of all five solos is included, as are full transcriptions. These transcriptions, found in Volume III, were made directly from the videotapes.

The third stage involved a second videotaped interview. In each case I had done a preliminary analysis of the solo from the concert. In the interview, each drummer and I listened to a recording of the solo together, stopping whenever one of us heard something he wished to discuss. In all cases, these interviews include recited versions of material that was played in the solos. Transcripts of these interviews are also included in Volume II. All the interviews were conducted in English, with the exception of Murthy's, which were conducted in Tamil. The material was gathered from December 1987 to March 1991, in Madras, Middletown, Amherst, and Toronto.

This study is in three volumes. Volume I begins with a general introduction to the interrelationship of tāḷa, or measured rhythm, and the played material. This introduction is designed to be used on more than one level. For the
uninitiated reader/listener, it should provide most of the information needed to help in understanding the videotape. For the student of Karṇāṭak music, it represents a step toward a standardized rhythmic terminology. For the serious mṛdaṅgām student, I hope it clarifies the analyses and transcriptions. I assume that the reader has at least a passing knowledge of Karṇāṭak music terminology, as laid out in Brown, Sankaran, and Sambamoorthy.

The second part of Volume I is devoted to the detailed analysis of the five solos on the tape. The reader is urged to bear vividly in mind that the modes of expression and analysis used in this section do not come from any particular Indian source. A natural exception is my teacher, T. Ranganathan, who is in large measure responsible for my ability to do any of this work. Some of the formulas, notably 'x y x y x' as a code for the mōṛā form, evolved over the course of our work together. I honestly do not remember who formulated it first.

In no sense is this an attempt to reduce the living, developing phenomenon of Karṇāṭak drumming to a handful of written formulas. At the same time, the reader who employs these modes of analysis will be unlikely to misunderstand the examples of mṛdaṅgām composition represented in the analyses. At first glance, the preceding statement may seem self-contradictory. On the one hand is the denial of any claim to 'define' the structures; on the other is an assertion that the analysis is accurate. The solution to the paradox, if in fact there is one, lies in Korzybski's observation that "the map is not the territory". The scholar or analyst is no more or less than a map-maker; while no sane cartographer would assume an identity between map and territory, the
usefulness of his map is certainly dependent on its structural similarity with the territory. Thus the object of the analyses is ease in negotiating the ‘territory’ of the mrdangam solo.

Volumes II and III contain the transcriptions of the interviews and tanis respectively. With the exception of the stroke notation used in the solo transcriptions and occasionally in the analyses, the notation used is the indigenous drum language known as solkattu. Wherever possible, the solkattu is the drummer’s own, as taken from the Second Interview. Where this was not available, I have used solkattu that seemed appropriate to me. There are many cases where the solkattu used in the analysis is not an exact match with the syllables used in the transcription of the tani. In such cases the solkattu used in the analysis comes from the Second Interview. This should not create any serious problems, since the rhythmic identity between the two should be clear in all cases.

The material herein may be read in any order, depending on the level and interests of the reader. For some, the First Interviews will be the best point of entry into this world, while others may wish to begin with the videotape. Since the videotape, analyses, Second Interviews and transcriptions are all linked by time codes, some readers may wish to refer to all of them at once. I recommend that the uninitiated reader start with the videotape, and then proceed to Volume I, Part I, before taking on the analyses.
The fluid, cyclic structure of this work demands that there not be a "conclusion" in the usual sense of the term. This is a beginning, suggesting many possible directions for future work, for me as well as for others. These directions include such divergent paths as strictly ethnomusicological analysis and interactive multi-media computer programs. The latter, already begun by Greg Jalbert and Doug MacKenzie, is of particular interest to me and will, no doubt, have an important impact on the development of ethnomusicological methods.

Finally, given the generosity and clarity of expression of the five masters who contributed to this work, and the patient reading of several interested people, I can honestly claim full responsibility for any mistakes and shortcomings in these pages.
GLOSSARY

adavu—a characteristic pattern of movement and gesture in bharata nātyam.

ādi tāla—structurally, caturaśra jāti tripuṭa tāḷa. The most common and familiar of all the Kāmāṭak tāḷas.

āksara—the beat in a tāḷa cycle, reckoned by any one of the appropriate hand gestures.

āṅga—the complex hand gestures that are combined to form the various tāḷa structures.

arudi—in tāḷa structure: after eḍuppu, the beat in the tāḷa at which the song comes to a cadence. In solo structure, a small mōrā, usually following a larger cadential figure, that resolves at this point.

āvarta—one cycle of any tāḷa.

bhajan—devotional songs meant for group singing.

bharata nātyam—the principal classical dance form of South India.

bheda—difference.

caturaśra—the class of all quadruple rhythms.

damaru yati—a shape generated by phrases that go from long to short and back to long.

drūta kāla—fast tempo, twice as fast as madhyama.

drutam—one of the fixed-duration aṅgas, it is always two akṣaras long; it comprises a clap and a wave.

eduppu—the point in a tāḷa cycle where the sāhityam begins.
gatam—a pitched clay pot, often used as a secondary percussion instrument.

gati—literally, "gait" (Skt); the subdivisions of beats, according to the same five
classes as jāti. It is synonymous with nadai, its Tamil counterpart.

gopucca yati—a rhythmic shape characterized by the orderly reduction of pulse
totals of successive phrases.

gumiki—a modulated sound produced from the toppi of the mṛdaṅgam by
striking with one or more fingertips and exerting pressure with the heel of
the hand.

guru—one's principal teacher.

jāti—a class of rhythms. In tāḷa theory, the varieties of the laghu. In this study, it
also includes larger rhythmic structures, mōrās, kōrvais, etc., composed in
pulse totals that bear an integral numeric relationship with one of the five
classes.

kaccheri—the full concert of Karṇāṭak music.

kalai—applied to a particular tāḷa, kaḷai indicates the size of its akṣaras in
mātras. Oru kaḷai ādi tāḷa, for example, is composed of one-mātra
akṣaras, whereas ren đu kaḷai indicates a two-mātra akṣara.

kalpana—lit., "decoration"; the moment-to-moment improvisational
elaborations that lead from one structural point to the next in a drum solo or
svara exposition.

kanakku—lit., "calculation"; refers to all the compositional formulas and
principles used in constructing mōrās, kōrvais, motifs, etc.

kanjira—a frame drum made from jackwood, with a lizard skin head. An
important secondary percussion instrument.

kārvai—the separations among the three statements ('x' figures) in a mōrā.
More generally, a term for any group of unarticulated pulses. Kārvai
includes as part of its measurement an articulated first pulse, if present.

khanda—the class of all quintuple rhythms.
konakkol—the spoken performance of solkaṭṭu patterns within a concert.

koraippu—lit., "reduction"; a section of a drum solo that involves more than one drummer. In a typical koraippu, the drummers trade progressively smaller groups of phrases according to one of two plans. The focus may be on parts of the cycle: full-, half-, quarter- and eighth cycles, for example; alternately, it may be on jāti-related groups: miśra, khaṇḍa, etc.

kōrvai—An intricate rhythmic composition, ending in a mōrā, used at important structural points during a tani āvartanam.

kriyas—the hand movements: claps, waves, and finger counts, that mark beats. These are organized into āṅgas, which in turn are the aggregates out of which specific tālas are constructed.

kṛti—the most common song form in the modern Karnāṭak concert. The tani āvartanam almost always takes place in the context of a kṛti.

laksya—feeling, or intuition: conceived in opposition to laksana, or learning.

madhyama kāla—"middle speed"; the section of svarakalpana or a drum solo in which all pulses may be accented.

mātra—in terms of akṣara structure, the component that determines the size of the akṣara: see kalai.

miśra—the class of rhythms based on seven.

mōrā—the fundamental cadential structure of Karnāṭak music. A mōrā usually consists of a phrase or statement repeated three times with separations that may be articulated. Its structure sets up a temporary tension with that of the tāla that is usually resolved at an important structural point in the cycle.

mṛdaṅga yati—a rhythmic shape in which phrases go short-long-short, in imitation of the shape of the mṛdaṅgam.

mṛdaṅgam—the principal percussion instrument of Karnāṭak music. Its structure and history are well covered in Brown and Sankaran.
paran—a type of fast, densely articulated drumming pattern characteristic of the ending stages of a tani.

periyam mōrā—the penultimate composition of a tani āvartanam, formally designed to be immediately recognized by the other ensemble members.

rāga—the melodic framework within which Karnātak music is composed.

rūpaka tāla—structurally, caturaśra jāti rūpaka tāla, 2+4 beats. It is usually reckoned as a three-beat cycle.

sāhityam—the text of a song.

sama—the first beat of a tala cycle.

sama yati—a rhythmic shape in which all elements are the same length.

śaṅkīrṇa—the class of rhythms based on nine.

sarvalaghuc—the range of time-shaping patterns that carry the tāla- and aṅkāra-structures. Contrasted with kaṇakkū
dolkattu—the spoken rhythms, derived from drum sounds, of Karnātak music. Also, the system of teaching spoken rhythm and tāla-keeping as a unified whole.

srotovahā yati—a rhythmic shape in which phrases go from short to long.

svara kalpana—melodic improvisations within the kṛtī form, using solfège syllables.

tāla—in general, the whole subject of rhythm: specifically, any of the individual rhythmic cycles in the Karnātak system.

tani āvartanam—the extended percussion solo in a concert of Karnātak music.

tavil—the main percussion instrument used in performance with the nāgasvaram.

tillana—a song form characteristic of bharata nātyam, often adapted for vocal and instrumental concerts.
tiśra—the class of rhythms based on three.

toppi—the lower, non-pitched head of the mṛdaṅgam: the left head, for a right-handed player.

trikāla—a compositional or improvisational device characterized by three repetitions of a figure, each exactly twice the speed of the preceding one.

valandalai—the higher, pitched head of the mṛdaṅgam. The right head, for a right-handed player.

vidvan—a master performer.

vilamba kāla—“slow speed”: in a given beat structure, patterns played at this tempo usually accent only half the possible pulses.

visama yati—a rhythmic arrangement with no distinguishable shape.

yati—the rhythmic shape of a group of phrases.
USE OF NON-ENGLISH TERMS

The terms used in Kannāṭak music come from at least three Indian languages; Sanskrit, Tamil, and Telugu. While I have not tried to keep these sources distinct, I have made every effort to transliterate them as they are pronounced by the musicians who contributed to this study. My sources for proper transliteration were Brown, Sankaran, Reck, and Viswanathan. Within Volume I, Part I, foreign terms are underlined the first time they appear. Beginning with Volume I, Part II, they are not underlined at all.
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T. Ranganathan

March 13, 1924—December 21, 1987

T. Ranganathan was a unique figure, not only in the worlds of Karnatak music and Ethnomusicology, but in the lives of his students. As the supplier of lesson material for Robert Brown’s dissertation, he laid out for the first time, for non-Indians at least, the structure of the lessons that are at the heart of a mrdanga student’s training. In collaborating with Brown, Ranga began a process that would continue through the rest of his life: that of communicating his extraordinary musical insights to non-Indian students.

He had retired from active performance when Brown sought him out; unhappy with the highly-politicized Madras music scene, he was working in an orphanage. When Brown set up the World Music Program at Wesleyan in the mid-sixties, Ranga, as his informant, was the natural first choice as a mrdanga teacher. In fact, he was the first Visiting Artist in the program’s history.

In terms of his breadth of playing experience, Ranga was unparalleled; the grandson of Vina Dhanammal, brother of T. Balasaraswati and T. Viswanathan, he accompanied the delicate vina and the robust bharata natyam with equal grace and sensitivity. His accompaniment was always subtle, lively and appropriate, and he had an uncanny ability to coax delightful sounds from the most uncooperative instrument.

While his temperament may not have been suited to the kinds of ‘politically correct’ behavior that would have made him a mainstay of the South Indian concert circuit, Madras’ loss turned out to be America’s gain. Ranga’s personality, outspokenness, and seemingly inexhaustible sense of humor made him beloved by almost everyone he met, from bank tellers to faculty colleagues.
To be sure, the rose had thorns, in unpredictable places, but Ranga's teaching room and home were always full of students and friends, and his telephone was usually busy, even before his sons reached adolescence.

It was as a teacher that Ranga's genius reached full flower. From the first 'ta di tôm nam', he never taught any two students exactly the same material. He re-invented his teaching process according to the needs and capacity of each new student. Those of us who were fortunate enough to work with him for extended periods slowly learned to identify the generative matrices out of which this ever-changing material was born. He was delighted whenever an advanced student revealed a compositional principle or application of which he had been unaware. In his rhythmic universe, almost no approach was inherently disallowed, and experimentation was actively encouraged. He loved to illustrate points by the use of (often ribald) metaphors; the message got over, and everybody got to laugh. He described his life-long dedication to teaching with a characteristic metaphor: “All I do is lead horses to water.”

I knew when I left for India in June, 1987 that I might not see him again. His health had been failing for several years, and he was subject to dark depressions. On the morning of Dec 22, Karaikudi Mani called me to give me the news that Ranga was gone. Work on this project had just begun to gather some momentum, and I had hoped to show him what I had done. It was not to be, but he knew and I knew that this work would never have been possible without him. As a musician, he moved me deeply. As a teacher, he inspired me beyond what I knew was possible. As a friend, he was compassionate, supportive, and generous to a fault. I loved him profoundly, and every word of this study is dedicated to his memory.
Part One:
The Field and its Properties
INTRODUCTION
PULSE AND RHYTHMIC UNITY

An uninitiated listener, in first encountering a tani āvartanam, will quite likely be struck by the apparent independence of the material played by the drummer and the hand gestures employed by the person reckoning the cyclic rhythmic structure called the tāḷa. One notices that the played material sometimes reinforces the tāḷa; at other times there seems to be no clear relationship between the two. With practice, one begins to hear recurrences and resolutions even in rhythmically difficult passages. Still, the relationship of pattern and beat structure is likely to be puzzling.

The fact that the drum solo in Karnāṭak music is an ensemble piece may lead to the misapprehension that the tāḷa is somehow being laid over independently existing patterns, or that the patterns are somehow filling a neutral space. The relationship of the played material with the tāḷa is certainly complex, but the two are demonstrably of one unified substance. The tāḷa in its unwavering repetition exerts a centripetal force on the material, while the grouping into rhythmic phrases at times exerts a centrifugal pull with respect to the tāḷa. Rhythmic unity requires simultaneous attention to the structure of the tāḷa and the movement of the patterns.

The means for maintaining this unity are given to the musician in his earliest days as a student in the form of the solkattu¹ method. In this method,

¹Tamil: 'words bound together'
one of the most ingenious features to have evolved within the Karnāṭak drumming tradition, both cycle and pattern are, literally, embodied.

In principle, the solkaṛṭtu system is deceptively simple. The tāḷa structure is reckoned by a recurrent set of hand gestures, while the phrases are spoken in syllables that derive from the mṛdaṅgam sounds. ² The key to understanding the power of the solkaṛṭtu method is in the dual nature of ‘pulse’. In terms of tāḷa, pulse behaves as the smallest regular subdivision of the beat, or aksara. There is no such thing as an abstract beat without any inner character; the subdivisions of the aksara are always at least potentially active. Even if nothing audible is going on in a particular beat or group of beats, the drummer will be reckoning a subdivided beat. At the level of tāḷa structure, the definition of a particular cycle is incomplete without the specification of a dominant gati, or subdivision.

In terms of the phrases, pulse behaves as a stabilizer, enabling their true rhythmic shapes to be perceived. As there is no beat without subdivision, there is no pattern apart from the beat. A survey of the total pulse durations of the composed portions of these five solos reveals that every one of them was conceived with a particular range of tāḷa settings in mind.

²Brown (v.1, pp135-6) has pointed out the parallel development of syllables and strokes. A spoken phrase suggests a range of possible manifestations in playing, as will be obvious to anyone who compares the analyses and interviews with the actual transcriptions.
Thus there is a fundamental unity of rhythmic nature of which the tālā and the spoken/played patterns are complementary aspects. The drummer must develop a simultaneous awareness of this pulse-level unity in order to master his art. For the student, this amounts to walking a razor’s edge: if he concentrates exclusively on the phrases, the hand gestures suffer; if he concentrates exclusively on keeping the tālā, he will be likely to forget the phrases.

In either of these cases, it is immediately clear to the student that he has erred, and that, therefore, the integral nature of the phrase-tālā relationship is not yet a matter of physical confidence. This physical confidence is entirely necessary to the musician’s development, since it frees his conscious mind to explore new rhythmic territories. It also prepares him for the concert situation, in which someone else keeps the tālā. Finally, it provides a kind of ‘censor’ that may prevent him from trying something in public that is not yet thoroughly understood. This inner ‘censorship’, or awareness of physical diffidence with respect to the relationship between the tālā and a pattern or composition, may be the source of the prevailing notions concerning the nature of musical ‘mistakes’.

As the reader/listener will notice, there are several cases within the five tani āvartanams analyzed here where a drummer begins a composition or motif and aborts before completion. There are no cases where a drummer finishes something on the wrong beat. The former ‘mistake’ is considered allowable,
while the latter is not, possibly because it indicates a lack of awareness that the composition and tāḷa have come apart. As Thelonious Monk is reputed to have said, "There are two kinds of mistakes—the regular kind, and the kind that don't sound so good."

The two complementary aspects of pulse, the subdivided beat and the phrase, may be thought of as context and behavior. We will first examine the characteristics of the context, with attention both to those properties that are common to every tāḷa, and to those peculiar to āḍī tāḷa, the particular cycle in which the five solos analyzed here are set.
CHAPTER ONE

Tāḷa: the Field

It has been stated above that the tāḷa is not a neutral space into which patterns are somehow made to fit. In fact it is a highly charged field that exerts a tremendous and complex force on whatever rhythmic material exists within it. This brief outline will make use of graphic images to aid in understanding the characteristics of this force.

The tāḷa, as any student of Karṇāṭak music knows, is a regularly recurring cycle of beats. For the present purposes, then, we may begin by representing any tāḷa as a circle.
The fundamental unit within any tāḷa is the beat. Beats, or akṣaras, are reckoned by sounded and unsounded hand gestures, known as kriyas; these are further grouped into aggregates called aṅgas.3 Although certain beats within a particular tāḷa carry structural weight, a fact that will be examined below, the internal structure of every beat is the same. In terms of the development of the graphic representation, then, any beat may be represented by another circle within the first one:

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3The history of tāḷa structure, including kriyas and aṅgas, is a fascinating study, but in the interest of keeping to the present subject, it will be left to others to pursue.
The particular tāḷa in which the solos analyzed here are set is ādi tāḷa,\textsuperscript{4} which has eight beats, represented in figure 3 by eight partly overlapping circles:

\textsuperscript{4}The full name of this structure is caturaśra jāti tripuṭa tāḷa. Its beats are grouped 4+2+2; the beginning of each group is marked with a clap. The significance of the arrangement of its angas will be examined below.
From examining figure 3, it will be clear that our cycle is beginning to show a distinct form. The particular version of ādi tāḷa under study is reckoned in slow tempo, or rendu kalai, which means that each of the eight beats, or akṣaras is
made up of two equal mātras. Figure 4 will show our tālā cycle further elaborated in this way.

---

5Mātras are not subdivisions, but components of beats. The akṣara may theoretically comprise as many mātras as the composer of a song wishes, although oru kaḷai (one mātra per akṣara) and reṇḍu kaḷai (two mātras per akṣara) are by far the most common.
The next level of detail has to do with the internal structure of the beats.

This is the level of pulse: from this point on, it will not be possible to separate
discussion of the field, the tālā, from behavior within it. Figure 5 presents two new features that will make the following interwoven discussion easier to understand. The first is a concentric circle that may be considered as representing the boundary between subdivision and phrase. The second is a series of solid and dashed lines representing the articulations of beats and half-beats respectively.
The discussion of pulse organization requires the introduction of numbers. The numbers with which the reader must become familiar fall into five classes.
With respect to the subdivision of the beat, the centripetal aspect of pulse, these are called \textit{gati}, or 'gait'. With respect to the organization of phrases, the centrifugal aspect of pulse, they are called \textit{jāti}.

In the discussion of \textit{gati} and \textit{jāti}, it is suggested that the reader consider these five classes of rhythm as having a 'geometric' component. This suggestion comes from a literal reading of the names of the first two, \textit{caturaśra} ('four-sided') and \textit{tiśra} (from 'tryaśra', 'three-sided'). The numbers used in this discussion, then, are not so much quantities as types of rhythmic charge that characterize pulse both in form (\textit{gati}) and function (\textit{jāti}).
Five Rhythmic Families

South Indian music tradition has handed down five rhythmic families, or classes of rhythm known as ‘jāṭis’. They are listed according to the traditional order in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>jāti/gati</th>
<th>number</th>
<th>possible expansions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>caturaśra</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8, 16, 32, 64, 128, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tiśra</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6, 12, 24, 48, 96, 192, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miśra</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14, 28, 56, 112, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khandā</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10, 20, 40, 80, 160, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>śaṅkīrṇa</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18, 36, 72, 144, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In its most common use, the term jāti refers specifically to the duration of the laghu⁶ within a given tāḷa structure. Within this study, all five solos are within the same tāḷa; thus the derivation of tāḷa structures need not concern us. But the term can also be applied to any phrase, group of phrases or composition whose pulse total is in an integral numeric relationship with one of the five. In the context of this study, then, jāti will always refer to such numeric relationships. A five-pulse phrase, for example, will be referred to as a khaṇḍa jāti phrase; an eighty-pulse kōrvai will likewise be referred to as a khaṇḍa jāti kōrvai, even though its phrases may not be arranged in five-pulse groups.

Within each jāti, expansion can only take place by doubling or redoubling. For example, 12 and 24 are found under tiśra, whereas 18 and 36, while neatly divisible by 3, belong to śaṅkīrṇa because they are even doubles of nine. The necessity of expansion by doubling renders inadmissible within the five families numbers such as 15(5*3), 21(7*3), 35(7*5); pulse totals of this type will be called 'compound jātis' within this study.

---

⁶One of the beat-aggregates. It is made up of a clap and finger counts, adding up to three, four, five, seven or nine beats. The system of deriving tāḷa structures is laid out in Brown, V.1, p.11, among others.
So far we have applied the five families to the grouping of pulses into phrases. The five families also represent the range of possible subdivisions of the beat, the other aspect of ‘pulse’. As stated above, ‘jāti’ refers to the former function. The term ‘gati’, on the other hand, will be used with the same five ‘family’ names as they apply to subdivision of the beat. Unlike the phrases, which may have a compound jāti structure, or no relation to any of the five families, the gati almost invariably conforms with the identity of one of the five. Every beat of every tāla is subdivided according to one of the five gatis. If no gati name is specified, a given akṣara may safely be assumed to be moving in caturaśra gati. There is no implied accent structure within any gati. Any pulse may be accented; accents are generated by phrase groupings. This fact leaves the drummer great freedom in the generation of material.

While they accept the limit to five possible gatis, the drummers actively generate compositions comprising pulse totals that apply to multiple jāti/gatis. This is largely because such compositions may be used in a variety of tāla and gati contexts. The most comprehensive example in the present study is Raghu’s first kōrvai, which comprises 180 pulses, or 4*5*9(3*3). It represents four of the five jātis, and thus could be performed in caturaśra, tiśra, khaṇḍa, or śankīrtana gati, as well as in any tāla whose beat total is a multiple of one of the four. He

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7There are notable exceptions. It is not at all uncommon to hear tavil players play in compound gatis. This practice seems to represent a major difference in the two traditions. Within the mṛdaṅgam tradition, T. Ranganathan, among others taught that the use of compound gatis is entirely legitimate, albeit difficult to execute.
performs it once each in caturaśra (8/beat), khaṇḍa (10/beat), and tiśra (12/beat) gatis.

Throughout this study, the following graphic aids will be used to help in identifying subdivisions or phrase shapes according to the appropriate rhythmic family. The first two, caturaśra and tiśra, were inspired by their original Sanskrit meanings, ‘four-sided’ and ‘three-sided’. The others may, with a little imagination, be seen as derived from combinations of these two.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{caturaśra} & \quad \begin{tikzpicture}
\draw (0,0) -- (1,1) -- (2,0) -- (3,1) -- (4,0);
\end{tikzpicture} \\
\text{tiśra} & \quad \begin{tikzpicture}
\draw (0,0) -- (1,1) -- (2,0);
\end{tikzpicture} \\
\text{khaṇḍa} & \quad \begin{tikzpicture}
\draw (0,0) -- (1,1) -- (2,0) -- (3,1) -- (4,0);
\end{tikzpicture} \\
\text{miśra} & \quad \begin{tikzpicture}
\draw (0,0) -- (1,1) -- (2,0) -- (3,1) -- (4,0) -- (5,1) -- (6,0);
\end{tikzpicture} \\
\text{śaṅkīra} & \quad \begin{tikzpicture}
\draw (0,0) -- (1,1) -- (2,0) -- (3,1) -- (4,0) -- (5,1) -- (6,0) -- (7,1) -- (8,0);
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{align*}
\]

As these shapes are used to represent beat subdivisions, they make possible a still more detailed view of the energy patterns of our graphic tāla cycle. Figure 6 represents our cycle with the subdivision specified as caturaśra:
Having examined the internal structure of the akṣara, we may look at a larger context, that of the kaḷai.
reṇḍu kaḷai ādi tāla, arai īḍam.

The term ‘kaḷai’ refers to the size of each akṣara, or beat, in the cycle. This is measured in mātras,⁸ which in turn are subdivided in pulses according to the appropriate gati. By this reckoning, each akṣara in a cycle of ādi tāla, reṇḍu kaḷai, will comprise two mātras; in caturaśra gati, each of these will be four pulses in duration, giving a total of eight pulses per akṣara. The following diagram should be helpful.

While each of these eight-pulse akṣaras has the same internal structure, the arrangement of them into aṅgas results in some beats carrying a greater structural ‘weight’ than others. This has something to do with the fact that every aṅga begins with a clap, although a clapped beat is not necessarily more

⁸As will be noted repeatedly throughout this study, the terms are used in a variety of ways among the drummers who participated. Different uses of this term are to be found in Raghu Interview pt 2, vol.2, p.238, and Murthy, Interview 2, ibid., p. 170, whose use conforms with my use of the term ‘pulse’.
important than an unsounded beat. The most important beat in any tāḷa is the clapped first beat, called sama.

Two other main structural points in a tāḷa cycle, eduppu and arudi, are related to the rhythmic setting of a song. The eduppu is the place in the cycle where the song text begins; this may coincide with the sama, or come before or after it. Since the tani āvartanam does take place within the performance of a song, the drummer will use as the eduppu the point in the cycle at which the text of the section used by the melodic performer for the svarakalpana begins; this may be pallavi, anupallavi, or caranam. All the drummer's formal cadences should resolve at this point. In rendu kaḷai, the eduppu may be any of the four quarters of the first beat, although it is most common for svara elaborations, and thus the tani āvartanam, to begin coincidentally with one of the mātras, viz. on the sama or on the middle of the first beat. The latter, known as arai idam (Tamil: 'half-place'), is the eduppu for all five solos in this study.

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9For example, beats three and seven in aḍi tāḷa are of comparable structural weight; the former is silent, the latter, clapped.

10The reader should bear in mind that the eduppu may change from section to section within a song.

11An eduppu falling before the sama, known as 'ānāgata', is possible, but rare.
The sama-eṣuppu relationship is of some interest. Even though the important formal cadences—mōrās, kōrvais, etc.—must resolve at the eṣuppu, most of the sarvalaghu\textsuperscript{13} patterns begin and change with the beginnings of beats. The eṣuppu, then, is usually invoked during a solo only when something structurally significant is going on. However, the reader/listener will find examples of mōrās ending on the sama, sarvalaghu figures and motivic passages that mimic the eṣuppu in other parts of the cycle, and kōrvais that are designed to ‘wrap’ from sama to eṣuppu. Thus there is some flexibility in how these structural points are treated. In the analyses, examples will be pointed out as they arise.

As is the case with eṣuppu, arudi is based on the setting of the sāhityam. But while it is common for a song text to begin before or after the sama, the arudi usually coincides with a clap in the cycle. In ādi tāla this is usually the

\textsuperscript{12}See Chapter Two below for definitions of these terms.

\textsuperscript{13}Defined in Chapter Two.
second clapped beat, beat five. It is often used as the target point for a secondary cadence at important structural points in a solo.

The tālā context for the tani āvartanam examples analyzed in this study, then, may be summarized as follows: it is an eight-beat cycle, with each beat, or akṣara, comprising two four-pulse mātras. The eduppu, or starting point for the song text, is half-way through the first beat, and the arudi is beat five. Our tālā diagram may now be completed, in figure 7, by the addition of appropriate labels.
rendu kalai adi tala, arai idam, caturastra gati

movement of patterns
caturastra gati

eDuppu-arai idam

1- sama (clap)

5- arudi (clap)

figure 7
For obvious reasons, it will be necessary to notate all the musical examples in the rest of this study not around a circle, but as if they followed a straight line. The reader is urged to bear in imagination that all mṛdaṅgam playing takes place within the sort of energy field diagrammed above. The tālā will remain steady throughout each solo, except with respect to gati, which is changed at the discretion of the drummer. Even during gati changes, the overall tempo of the tālā does not change, except for small changes related to the gathering and release of tension. In other words, an eight-pulse beat and a ten-pulse beat must take exactly the same amount of time. Thus gati changes require precise incremental speed changes within the boundaries of the beat.
CHAPTER TWO
FUNCTIONING WITHIN THE FIELD

Having briefly outlined the possibilities and requirements of the particular tāḷa structure, we may proceed by examining the important features of the actual playing. The overall structure of the tani āvartanam is characterized by an interweaving of patterns that define the flow of musical time with set rhythmic compositions and improvised motivic figures that reveal quasi-spatial rhythmic designs. The former will be referred to as sarvaḷaghu, the latter as kanakku.

sarvaḷaghu: The Shaping of Time

Brown did not mention either this term or the one often used in its place, ṭeka. Throughout his work he referred to the subject of the present section as ‘germinal patterns’, a name that suggests that he understood both the fertility and mutability of the material. Sankaran prefers the term ‘flow patterns’¹⁴ to ‘ṭeka’, which he feels is heavily laden with Hindustani connotations. Whatever the word, the material under examination is the body of time-shaping patterns in which a mṛdaṅgam player passes most of his minutes on the stage.

¹⁴The Art of Drumming: South Indian Mṛdaṅgam, p. 137
In this study, ‘sarvalaghu’ will refer to all the groups of patterns, syncopated or not, in any gati, that serve a primarily propulsive, rather than cadential function. Sarvalaghu patterns tend to draw attention to the flow of rhythmic time, rather than to its design possibilities. This extremely broad and necessarily ambiguous category is set up in a bi-polar relationship with the notion of kanakku, or calculation. Under the latter heading will fall the principal motivic designs and cadential structures of Karnāṭak drumming. These are described later as ‘designs within the fabric of time’. Sarvalaghu may be understood within the ‘fabric’ metaphor to include the background material that is both the source and destination of the designs. Not all the played material sorts neatly into one of the two categories; they represent the ends of a spectrum of possible behavior.

Sarvalaghu may be recognized by the following features: tonal, semi-melodic phrases are arranged in patterns that bear an integral relation with the given akṣara structure. These patterns are arranged into groups that bear an analogous relationship with the tāḷa structure. In Sankaran’s word, they ‘carry’ the tāḷa. In the following paragraphs we will examine the characteristics of sarvalaghu in the context of akṣara and tāḷa.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{15}}\text{vol.2, p.261}\]
sarvalaghu and akṣara structure

Generally speaking, sarvalaghu patterns have one of two types of relationship with the beat, or akṣara. They may reinforce the beat by organizing pulses in such a way as to emphasize its structure, or they may use a contrasting organization of pulses, thereby generating a more complicated relationship with a beat or pair of beats. In the examples below, the figure under the pattern represents the beat, while the figure over the pattern represents the phrase-shape.

\[\text{example 1}\]

\[\text{example 2}\]
In example 1 the pattern has a pulse-organization that mirrors the structure of the akṣara, while example 2 exhibits a structure based on the possibilities inherent in the pairing of beats. The 3-3-2 structure of the pattern is a possibility because the pair of beats has eight pulses, none of which is inherently accented. The resultant pattern has a more complex symmetry. Karnāṭak drummers make use of both types according to appropriate aesthetic considerations.

Whether the relation of the pattern to the internal akṣara structure is simple or complex, repetitions of the dominant sarvalaghu pattern in a given section of a song or solo will usually begin and end coincidentally with a beat or pair of beats. This is true even if the the pattern contains strongly accented strokes that seem to be in tension with the pulse-organization of the beat. In the drummer's mind such tension is an aesthetic tool, a realization of possibilities that always exist within the pattern/beat relationship. The reader will find a tremendous variety of these possibilities in the tani āvartanam examples analyzed in Part Two.

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16Note, for example, the opening of Raghu's solo.
sarvalaghul and tāḷa structure

As stated above, mṛdaṅgam players organize their sarvalaghul patterns according to the structure of the given cycle. As we will see, this fact generates a range of possible approaches, since the tāḷa structure and the akṣara structure may differ numerically. The drummer may choose to emphasize either structure in his choice of pattern, though in terms of groupings of patterns, he will almost certainly draw attention to the tāḷa structure. In the following example, the basic sarvalaghul pattern,

\[
\text{ta} - - - \text{din} - - - \text{din} - - - \text{na} - - -
\]

suggests a four-pulse akṣara structure. In reṇḍu kaḷai ādi tāḷa, it might well be arranged into groups of four, as follows:
The final phrase functions to reveal the ‘four-ness’ of the grouping. While under some circumstances it could also serve to herald a formal cadence, a mūrā for example, in the largest number of cases its placement is in response to a demand of the tāḷa structure. It signals the approach of an important point in the cycle.

The same figure might be used in ṛūpaka tāḷa, a common three-beat cycle; while the internal structure of the akṣara is the same in both cases, the grouping of repetitions must reflect the difference in tāḷa structures.
If the rūpaka tāḷa version is graphically represented, a match of phrase with beat is clear.

So far, we have developed phrases according to the akṣara structure, using groups of phrases to respond to the tāḷa structure. But as was stated above, the sarvalaghū pattern may also be designed according to the tāḷa structure. There are at least two ways to do this—both examples will be derived from the same figure,

\[
ta - - - din - - - din - - - na - - -
\]
that has been used so far. The first possibility is to add material to the pattern, increasing its total duration to three akṣaras per repetition.

In this approach, the akṣara is still reinforced by the parts of the pattern, while the whole line reflects the tāla structure.

The second possibility is to remove material, as follows (removed material is in bold type):
ta - - - din - - - din - - - na - - -
ta - ka - din - - - din - - - na - - -
ki ta ta ka din - - - din - - - na - - -
{ta - ka - din - - ta din - ta - din - ta -}

Removal of this material results in a more complex relationship of the pattern with the akṣara structure, as the following diagram shows. The pattern must now be repeated four times in three beats, in response to a demand generated by the akṣara structure. Once again, the akṣara is represented by the line over the figure, while the phrase-shape is represented by the line under it.

As will be pointed out below, this approach is less common than the others as a sarvalaghū choice, though it is often applied in motivic development. It is safe to say that it is only considered sarvalaghū if the akṣara is moving in caturaśra gati.

It is a necessary feature of sarvalaghū patterns, then, that the tāla structure and the akṣara structure be interwoven in some mutually ‘comfortable’ way. So
far we have assumed that the latter is four pulses in duration. While this assumption was convenient for laying out the basic organizing principles, it must be put aside in order to understand the full range of sarvalaghu possibilities available to the mṛdaṅgam player. In improvisation, the akṣara structure is affected by two other considerations, kāla and gati.

**akṣara and kāla**

As applied to akṣara structure, kāla refers to stages of development within an accompaniment or a solo performance. In the early, or vilamba kāla stages of a mṛdaṅgam solo, it is most often the case that the sarvalaghu patterns are organized into two pulse-per-mātra groups. At this stage, even if pulses are accented other than the ones coinciding with hand gestures,¹⁷ these accents will generally fall midway through their respective mātras. All five of the tanis analyzed in this study begin in this way.

At some point in a solo the decision is made to double the number of pulses per beat that may be accented. In other words, the sarvalaghu at the beginning of a solo, while it may contain patterns with more than two strokes per

---

¹⁷e.g., the opening section of Raghu's solo
mātra, usually will not accent them. The most common practice is to concentrate on patterns that derive from the archetype\textsuperscript{18}

\begin{center}
ta --- din --- din --- na ---
\end{center}

until the change to madhyama kāla. Once this change has taken place, the drummer is free to accent any pulse or group of pulses in his sarvalaghu patterns. He may even generate a pattern whose accent structure is a product of apparently different accents in the two hands. In the following example, the first line represents a pattern as it would be spoken. The second line represents the right hand strokes, and the third line, the left hand strokes.

\begin{center}
ta na ta di ta na ta di
N n T O N n T O
O O O O O O
\end{center}

As can be easily seen in the next diagram, the left hand strokes group the four-stroke right hand patterns into pairs.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
\text{ta na ta di} & \text{ta na ta di} \\
\hline
N n T O & N n T O \\
0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

The shift to madhyamakāla sarvalaghu patterns in a taniāvartanam opens the door for a wide variety of caturaśra jāti patterns; during the course of

\textsuperscript{18}Even in madhyama kāla, and in gati improvisations, there is a strong tendency among drummers to imitate this pattern in more syncopated contexts.
a typical solo, a drummer may focus on several of them, establishing each by sufficient repetition, then changing at will. The changes are sometimes marked by formal cadences, but this is not necessary. Sarvalaghu patterns may be played, and played with, for no other apparent purpose than the beauty of their sounds.\(^{19}\) A particularly interesting application of sarvalaghu patterns takes place within the shifting of akṣara subdivision known as gati bheda.

**akṣara and gati**

The sarvalaghu patterns that are used within the different gatis are likely to follow the akṣara structure closely, using the control of repetition in order to match the tāla. For example, the following type of arrangement, in khaṇḍa gati,

```
din - ta ṇa ta jo ṇu ta ṇa ta din - ta ṇa ta jo ṇu ta ṇa ta
```

is considered sarvalaghu, whereas the next one,

\(^{19}\)The author has heard some particularly beautiful solos that were made up entirely of such patterns, with no mūrās or kōrvais until the long mūrā and final kōrvai.
would most likely be thought of as a caturaśra jāti motivic figure within khaṇḍa gati. It would therefore fall closer to the ‘kaṇakku’ end of the spectrum, mainly because of the difficulty in its performance. At this point the categories seem to blur somewhat. Material such as the four-pulse figure repeated five times above, which is used as a sarvalaghu pattern in some contexts, has a kaṇakku function in others. There are many examples of this sort of context-shifting within the five tanis analyzed in this study. They will be identified as they arise.

**use of sounds in sarvalaghu**

The most noticeable feature of sarvalaghu to the listener is the beauty of its sound. In general the tonal strokes are emphasized in sarvalaghu, including left hand ‘tom’ and gumiki. Densely articulated patterns are most often characterized by mītu, or pitched strokes, rather than by the strokes on the black spot combined with closed left hand that may predominate during formal cadences. The preference for more liquid, tonal sounds in sarvalaghu is reflected in the solkaṭṭus by which its patterns are spoken. For example, a typical eight-pulse sarvalaghu pattern is much more likely to be spoken according to example 1 below, than to example 2.
example 1
ta ṇa ta jo ṇu ta jo ṇu

dexample 2
ta ki ṭa ta ki ṭa ta ka

derivation of patterns

The generation of phrases and patterns is one of the principal subjects of a mṛdaṅgam student’s lessons. It is no surprise, then, that Brown’s account of his study with T. Ranganathan concentrates heavily and effectively on this topic. His analysis of the general development of material from sparsely- to densely-articulated, and from simple to complicated, is accurate enough that this subject need not be re-analyzed here. Still, a brief outline of the usual development of sarvalaghu patterns will be helpful in understanding the analyses.

In order to have the necessary propulsive effect, a sarvalaghu pattern must be repeated frequently enough to be established as the dominant rhythmic force within a passage. These repetitions, however, serve the purpose of

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20See v.1, chapters VII-XII
reinforcing not only the akṣara, but also the tāla structure, and so their grouping must somehow be made clear. If we return to a figure examined above,

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta} & \quad \text{din} & \quad \text{din} & \quad \text{na} \\
\text{ta-ka} & \quad \text{din} & \quad \text{din} & \quad \text{na} \\
\text{ki ta ta ka} & \quad \text{din} & \quad \text{din} & \quad \text{na} \\
\{\text{ta-ka} & \quad \text{din} & \quad \text{ta din} & \quad \text{ta din} & \quad \text{ta} \}
\end{align*}
\]

one way of clarifying the grouping can be seen. The syllables in bold type represent a progressive ‘filling up’ of the first ‘ta’ so that each statement is separated from the others. At the same time, a momentum is generated toward the end of the figure. This momentum is intensified by the last line, shown above in \{\}.

The momentum built up by such a grouping may lead to another grouping of the same type, to a more elaborately articulated grouping, to a new sarvalaghu pattern, to a mōrā, or to any other aesthetically appropriate rhythmic figure. The range of choices depends, among other considerations, on the stage of the tani āvartanam or song. These choices will be examined in the discussion of tani āvartanam in a following section.

Having examined the essential features of sarvalaghu, we may proceed to an investigation of the cadential structures employed in a tani āvartanam.
kaṇakku: Designs in the Fabric of Time

The cadential formulas of Karnāṭak drumming are referred to variously as mōrā, arudi, tīrṇānam, kōrvai, and ta din gi ṇa tom. A survey of the accounts provided in the few existing non-Indian writings on the subject leads to the impression that fundamental misunderstandings abound among scholars concerning every aspect of these formulas. This situation is not a result of shoddy scholarship, since there is no ‘standard definition’ for any of these terms among musicians or writers in India. Instead, it is a natural consequence of the fact that the non-Indian writers have been principally oriented as scholars and only secondarily as performers of the music.

The following paragraphs represent a broad outline of the Karnāṭak cadential formulas and structural principles that come under the rubric ‘kaṇakku’, or ‘calculation’.

The terms tīrṇānam and arudi are used in a variety of senses in South India; in order to avoid confusion, the former term will be assumed to refer to large rhythmic compositions in the bharata nātyam tradition. Since bharata nātyam is not the subject of this study, ‘tīrṇānam’ will not be used at all in the discussion of cadential formulas. ‘Arudi’ will refer only to a type of simple mōrā used as a secondary cadence, the function of which will be outlined below. It is hoped that readers accustomed to other uses of these terms will not experience
undue discomfort. The artists who contributed to the present study exhibited considerable flexibility with respect to all these terms, both in the interviews and in private, off-the-record conversations, even though each has his preferences. We will begin by examining the principal cadential form, the mōrā.

mōrā

The following account of the nature of the mōrā was offered by Brown:

A mōrā is a cross-rhythmical cadential phrase pattern within the tāḷa, (usually) repeated three times, with the last stroke of the third line ending on the samam or eḻuppū.

In order to analyze the design of a mōrā several factors have to be taken into account. First, we must determine the length of the entire pattern; this is complicated by the fact that there will always be an “extra” stroke at the end to finish the composition...or link it with a following important structural division...Second, we must determine the length of the individual phrases; this is complicated by the fact that the time length assigned to the terminal syllable of the first phrase (before beginning the second) and the time length assigned to the final syllable (before beginning the third) has no counterpart in the third phrase, for here the final syllable has, literally, no length. It is a point of contact for a following rhythmic structure...Therefore, third, we must determine the length of the gap between phrases one and two, and two and three.1

---

1 v.1, p. 151
Brown did not provide a specific notated example to illuminate his prose in this case. Had he done so, the result might have looked as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{ta ka di na tam -} \\
&\text{ta ka di na tam -} \\
&\text{ta ka di na [tam]} \\
\end{align*}
\]

The example would be analyzed as follows: the “length of the pattern” totals sixteen pulses; the “lengths of the individual phrases” would be five (ta ka di na tam), five (ta ka di na tam), and four (ta ka di na), separated by one-pulse “gaps” (-). With due respect to Brown, it must be pointed out that this mode of analysis conceals the structural aspects of the mōrā that make it possible for Karnatak drummers to make the split-second choices and adaptations for which they are famous.

**The Simple mōrā**

The mōrā may be understood as comprising two types of material, as Brown stated: the phrase, usually repeated three times, and the “gap”, or kārvai, separating phrase statements one and two, and two and three. Where Brown must be left behind is in the understanding of the borders between the two. What he called “the terminal syllable of each line”, which he understood as being followed by the “gap”, is not terminal at all; instead, it is the initial syllable of the kārvai, to which we will refer in these pages as the ‘y’ figure. This is an important difference between the kārvai and the ‘rest’ in Euro-American music. Kārvai
may include articulations, and thus may be better translated as 'separation', than as 'gap'.

The final stroke, e.g. '[tam]' above, is not calculated as part of the mōrā, but is instead "a point of contact for a following rhythmic structure..." Whereas the two 'y' figures exist in order to reveal aspects of rhythmic design, and may be placed so that they generate rhythmic tension with the beats, the purpose of the final stroke is to signal a firm re-entry into the tāla field; it is placed to release tension. It thus has a different meaning from the two 'y' figures, even though it is likely to have a similar sound.

In terms of structure, a well-formed mōrā will, under all but the most unusual circumstances, take the form

\[ x y x y x \]

where 'x', the 'phrase statement', must have a duration of at least 1 pulse, and 'y', the kārvai, may be '0'. In this paradigm form, it is assumed that all three 'x' figures are either identical or bear some orderly relation to one another, and that the 'y' figures are equal. As will be shown, these orderly relationships may be of tremendous complexity, analogous to fractal orders. However, one possibility that is categorically disallowed is a mōrā in which the first two 'x' figures are identical and the third is not. If we return to the mōrā notated above and re-examine it according to the 'x y x y x' formula, it can be seen as well-formed if \( x=4 \) (tākdān), and \( y=2 \) (tam -):
ta ka di na (x=4)
  tam - [y=2]
ta ka di na (x=4)
  tam - [y=2]
ta ka di na (x=4) [tam] {16}

It may seem that a small change has been made; in fact it has profound implications. Understood in this way, a mōrā may be transformed by a variety of processes to suit nearly any situation, by expanding or contracting 'x', or 'y', or both. These expansions and contractions are limited by two constraints.

First, in terms of duration, x≥1 and y≥0. This means that while 'y' may exist only as potential, 'x' must be articulated. Theoretically, then, the simplest possible mōrā would have the form {x=1, y=0}, as follows:

  ta (x=1) [y=0]
  ta (x=1) [y=0]
  ta (x=1)

Naturally, it is usual that somewhat larger 'x' values are chosen, even when 'y' remains zero. The most common 'x' phrase in general use with 'y' as zero is
five pulses in duration. It is the venerable 'ta din gi ṇa tom', also known as 'ta di ki ta tom'.

Written in the mōrā form:

\[
\begin{align*}
ta \text{ din gi } \text{ ṇa } \text{ tom} & \quad (x=5) [y=0] \\
ta \text{ din gi } \text{ ṇa } \text{ tom} & \quad (x=5) [y=0] \\
ta \text{ din gi } \text{ ṇa } \text{ tom} & \quad (x=5) 
\end{align*}
\]

As stated above, 'x', 'y', or both may be expanded or contracted within their defined roles. Expansion/contraction is reckoned in pulses, which may or may not be articulated. In the present example, the first possible expansion for 'y' would be to add a duration of one pulse. It is usual, but not absolutely necessary, for this to be unarticulated, as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
ta \text{ din gi } \text{ ṇa } \text{ tom} & \quad - \quad (x=5) [y=1] \\
ta \text{ din gi } \text{ ṇa } \text{ tom} & \quad - \quad (x=5) [y=1] \\
ta \text{ din gi } \text{ ṇa } \text{ tom} & \quad (x=5)
\end{align*}
\]

The next possible expansion, to 'y=2', might contain an articulation,

\[\ldots\]

---

\[\text{This phrase is used as a kind of code, or shorthand for the wide range of expanded and contracted versions of it that permeate the music.}\]

\[\text{The final syllable to which Brown referred will not always appear in the notation, since it is not, technically, part of the mōrā.}\]
ta din gi ŋa tom ta - (x=5) [y=2]
ta din gi ŋa tom ta - (x=5) [y=2]
ta din gi ŋa tom (x=5)

but the following version, with 'y' once again unarticulated, is just as likely:

ta din gi ŋa tom - - (x=5) [y=2]
ta din gi ŋa tom - - (x=5) [y=2]
ta din gi ŋa tom (x=5)

The longer the 'y' figures become, the greater the likelihood that they will contain one or more articulations. For example:

(ta din gi ŋa tom) [tam - - din - - - ](x=5) [y=7]
(ta din gi ŋa tom) [tam - - din - - - ](x=5) [y=7]
(ta din gi ŋa tom) (x=5)

How much of the 'y' figure is articulated is governed by aesthetic concerns, and not by any fixed notion of how a particular mòrä ought to go. In the following two examples, the mòrä above will be shown with two possible 'y' figures of equal duration; they will differ only in their density of articulation.
Example 1

(ta din gi ָnә toм) [- - - - - - - ](x=5) [y=7]
(ta din gi ָnә toм) [- - - - - - - ](x=5) [y=7]
(ta din gi ָnә toм) (x=5)

Example 2

(ta din gi ָnә toм) [tam - - t k t r k t t k](x=5) [y=7]
(ta din gi ָnә toм) [tam - - t k t r k t t k](x=5) [y=7]
(ta din gi ָnә toм) (x=5)

Example 2 provides a clue as to the range of aesthetic concerns hinted at above. By dividing the ‘y’ figure into a less articulated three-pulse group [tam - -] and a densely articulated four-pulse group [t k t r k t t k], a high contrast has been set up—higher, in fact, than the contrast between the ‘x’ figure and the initial ‘tam - -’ of the ‘y’ figure. The effect on the listener is likely to be an illusory impression that the ‘t k t r k t t k’ figure is an expansion of ‘x’, rather than part of ‘y’:

(ta din gi ָnә toм) [tam - - ](x=5) [y=3]
(t k t r k t t k ta din gi ָnә toм) [tam - - ](x=9) [y=3]
(t k t r k t t k ta din gi ָnә toм) (x=9)

The educated listener will be able to see through this deception because the ‘x’ figures do not follow the rule that they must be of identical duration, or exhibit an orderly expansion or contraction. Such deceptive use of the mәrә form is neither rare nor unconscious. The analyses to follow reveal not only many examples of deliberate deception, but several different types.
The rules for orderly expansion/contraction of 'x' figures are quite straightforward. In general, they may be reduced to the following single rule: For three different values for 'x' in a single mōrā, 'x₁', 'x₂', and 'x₃', the difference in pulses between 'x₁' and 'x₂' must equal the difference in pulses between 'x₂' and 'x₃', as indicated by the following formula.

\[ x₁ - x₂ = x₂ - x₃ \]

As an example, let us return to the sample mōrā above:

\[
\begin{align*}
ta & \text{ din } gi \ nə \ tom \ (x=5) \ [y=0] \\
ta & \text{ din } gi \ nə \ tom \ (x=5) \ [y=0] \\
ta & \text{ din } gi \ nə \ tom \ (x=5)
\end{align*}
\]

The simplest possible expansion is to add one pulse to the second 'x' and two pulses to the third. There are many ways to accomplish this, but it will be done here in an extremely common way, by adding unarticulated pulses—first after the

---

4 This formula is meant to indicate that the differences represented by the {⋯} signs are the same, and not that any negative durational values are suggested.

5 Brown has named the three types of pattern expansion 'prefix', 'infix', and 'suffix', depending on whether the material is added to the beginning, middle, or end of a phrase.
'din' in the second 'x', and then after 'ta' and 'din' in the third 'x'. This is, according to Brown's terminology, 'infix'.

\[
\begin{align*}
ta & \text{ din gi } \text{ na tom (}x_1=5\text{)} [y=0] \\
ta & \text{ din - gi } \text{ na tom (}x_2=6\text{)} [y=0] \\
ta & \text{ - din - gi } \text{ na tom (}x_3=7\text{)}
\end{align*}
\]

The order of the 'x' figures in the new mōrā may be reversed, again leading to values that satisfy the equation above.

\[
\begin{align*}
ta & \text{ - din - gi } \text{ na tom (}x_1=7\text{)} [y=0] \\
ta & \text{ din - gi } \text{ na tom (}x_2=6\text{)} [y=0] \\
ta & \text{ din gi } \text{ na tom (}x_3=5\text{)}
\end{align*}
\]

This expansion/contraction takes place according to yati, or rhythmic shape.\(^6\) There are three simple yatis: sama, or equal, meaning no expansion or contraction, gopucca (lit. 'cow's tail'), or reduction, and srotovaha (‘river-mouth’), or expansion. In addition, there are two compound yatis that are named for the drums whose shapes they evoke: mṛdaṅga, or short-long-short, and damaru, or long-short-long. The sixth yati, visama, meaning 'not the same', is used to describe a shape that does not fit any of the other five. The term 'visama' has decidedly pejorative connotations.

\(^6\)Yati is elaborated in nearly every available treatise on Karnatak music, and therefore need not be examined in detail here.
The Compound mōrā

So far, the examination of the mōrā has been confined to the basic, paradigm form, which will hereafter be called the 'simple' mōrā. In this manifestation, 'x' refers to a single phrase, the triple statements of which are separated by identical 'y' figures.

But more complex forms are possible in which each 'x' figure is itself in the mōrā form. For example, the following compound mōrā is taken from Raghu's first kōrvai:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta di } & \text{ ki } \text{ tā } \text{ tom} \\
\text{ta di } & \text{ ki } \text{ tā } \text{ tom} \\
\text{ta di } & \text{ ki } \text{ tā } \text{ tom } (x_1=15) \\
\text{ta } & \text{ - - tom } - - [y=6] \\
\text{ta di } & \text{ - ki } \text{ tā } \text{ - tom} \\
\text{ta di } & \text{ - ki } \text{ tā } \text{ - tom} \\
\text{ta di } & \text{ - ki } \text{ tā } \text{ - tom } (x_2=21) \\
\text{ta } & \text{ - - tom } - - [y=6] \\
\text{ta di } & \text{ - - ki } \text{ tā } \text{ - - tom} \\
\text{ta di } & \text{ - - ki } \text{ tā } \text{ - - tom} \\
\text{ta di } & \text{ - - ki } \text{ tā } \text{ - - tom } (x_3=27)
\end{align*}
\]

Each stage of this relatively complicated structure is in the form 'x y x y x' where all 3 'x' figures are of equal duration, and y=0. In the larger structure, the three 'x' figures are of different durations; their expansion is orderly in that the differences among them are the same. Each represents an increase of six pulses over its predecessor. The 'y' figures separating the three large 'x' figures are identical: six pulses overall, with two articulations. As was the case
with the simple mōrā, the three ‘x’ figures could be reversed; material from the three ‘x’ figures could also be redistributed in an orderly manner to generate different patterns. For example, the three stages could be rendered equal in duration by the following arrangement:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta} & \text{ di } \text{ ki } \text{ ū} \text{ tom} \\
\text{ta} & \text{ di } - \text{ ki } \text{ ū} \text{ - tom} \\
\text{ta} & \text{ di } - - \text{ ki } \text{ ū} \text{ - tom} & (x_1=21) \\
\text{ta} & - - \text{ tom } - - & [y=6] \\
\text{ta} & \text{ di } \text{ ki } \text{ ū} \text{ tom} \\
\text{ta} & \text{ di } - \text{ ki } \text{ ū} \text{ - tom} \\
\text{ta} & \text{ di } - - \text{ ki } \text{ ū} \text{ - tom} & (x_2=21) \\
\text{ta} & - - \text{ tom } - - & [y=6] \\
\text{ta} & \text{ di } \text{ ki } \text{ ū} \text{ tom} \\
\text{ta} & \text{ di } - \text{ ki } \text{ ū} \text{ - tom} \\
\text{ta} & \text{ di } - - \text{ ki } \text{ ū} \text{ - tom} & (x_3=21)
\end{align*}
\]

It is important to understand that the potential for this sort of change always exists for the mṛdaṅgam player; the mōrā form allows great flexibility within a given design idea. While certain essential features remain the same, in this case the total number of pulses (seventy-five) and the duration of the ‘y’ figures, any other component may change without distorting the structure of the mōrā. The mōrā, then, is not a fixed composition, but a range of choices within a structure. In the next section two types of mōrā will be examined that reveal still deeper levels of potential change.

---

7By no means is this a suggestion that augmentation is somehow a more important or fundamental process than diminution. Any pattern may have either process applied to it.
Enfolded and Unfolding möräs

The first of these two types may be referred to as the ‘enfolded’ mörä. In this type of structure, repeated material may be said to change function; what was ‘y’ in one stage, may function as ‘x’ in the next, giving rise to a kind of overlapped effect that may be shown by the following graphic representation:

At each of the second and third stages of this compound mörä, the new ‘x’ figure is made up of material from the previous ‘y’; at the same time, the previous ‘x’ disappears completely. On first encountering such a mörä, the listener may be bemused; it seems to be constructed as follows:

---

8Both these terms are my own. As far as I know, the artists use no such terms to describe these structural types.
ta ki ṭa tom - ta di ki ṭa tom ta ka ta ka tom - ta - tam - -
ta ki ṭa tom - ta di ki ṭa tom ta ka ta ka tom - ta - tam - -
ta ki ṭa tom - ta di ki ṭa tom ta ka ta ka tom - ta - tam - -
ta ka ta ka tom - ta - tam - -
ta ka ta ka tom - ta - tam - -
tom - ta - tam - -
tom - ta - [tam]

But the mōrā could not be considered well-formed by this analysis. It would have to satisfy two criteria; triple repetition, and orderly reduction. The former is satisfied by appeal to the notion of double function, as graphically represented above; that is, material that is used first as ‘y’, is subdivided as ‘x’ and ‘y’ in the following stages.9

The second criterion, orderly reduction, requires a fresh look at the formula used to determine well-formedness:

\[ x_1 \cdot x_2 = x_2 \cdot x_3 \]

---

9The fact that the listener is unlikely to notice immediately the change in function may be taken as deliberate on the part of the composer of this particular mōrā, Palani Subramania Pillai.
If this formula is understood to require strictly arithmetical values, then the enfolded mōrā under study does not appear to satisfy it. If, however, the formula's demands may be satisfied by another order of values, for example by phrases or sections of phrases, the mōrā may be understood as not only orderly, but elegant.

The entire composition may be described as arising out of a single four-part phrase:

{ta ki ūa to - ta di ki ūa to} {ta ka ta ka} {tom - ta -} {tam - -}

If this representation is compared with the graphic figure above, the logic of the mōrā is clear. Each phrase-part in its turn is used as an 'x' figure, with the remaining phrase-parts functioning as 'y'. The exception is the final {tam - -}, which alone functions entirely as part of 'y' throughout.

Having demonstrated the formal orderliness of this mōrā, it may be instructive to look at just how far from arithmetical symmetry its sections are:

---

10 Lively discussions are common among mṛdaṅgam players on the legitimacy, or lack of it, of phrase-based reductions and expansions that do not conform with strict arithmetical order. Artists of very high standing can be found to argue either side. Since both sides continue to be expressed, they are both assumed to be legitimate in these pages.

11 It is worth noting that each of the first three phrase-parts could be further subdivided in half, leading to another level of potential enfoldment.
It is obvious that the 'x' values do not fulfil any demand for arithmetical order. By an accident in this particular phrase structure, if 'y' values are substituted for 'x' values in the equation for well-formedness, they fit perfectly:

11-7=7-3

A further refinement of the mörä form, the 'unfolding' mörä, appears at first glance to conform with all the rules for well-formedness. Its form suggests a kind of bridge between the simple and the compound structures outlined above, in that it consists of one, then two, then three statements of a given phrase. For example:
ta di ki ta tom - (x_1=5) [y=1]

ta di ki ta tom

This example clearly fulfils the demand

x_1-x_2=x_2-x_3

and the mōrā could be seen as an example of orderly expansion within the simple mōrā form. But a closer look reveals two differences. First, the unfolding mōrā requires that

y\geq1

This is a practical necessity; if 'y' could equal zero, the boundaries among the three 'x' figures would not be clear enough to identify the mōrā type conclusively. The second difference is that the equation for well-formedness no longer holds strictly in every case, even though the incremental expansion involved may be entirely orderly. Consider the following:
ta di ki ta tom - (x₁=5)[y=1]

By contrast with the enfolded mōrā, which may be said to be contained potentially within a single phrase, and thus to exhibit a formal synchronicity, the unfolding mōrā requires time to reveal itself, and is thus formally diachronous. They share in common one interesting characteristic: unlike the other mōrā structures examined above, it is unlikely, though not impossible, for either of these forms to be played in reverse order.

Whatever the form of a mōrā, it is used to generate a temporary rhythmic tension. This is accomplished by superimposing another regular structure on the pulses, which are already strongly affected by the structure of the tāḷa field. To the extent that the same mōrā may be used in a variety of situations, an uninitiated listener may feel that it has been composed independently from the tāḷa. A full understanding of any of the Karnāṭak cadential forms requires simultaneous attention to the effect on the rhythmic matter, pulse, of both structures.
A mörä may be used at will during a mṛdaṅgam solo, but there are certain situations in which it must be present. Three examples of such situations, motivic development, arudi, and kōrvai, will be taken up next.

Motivic Development

As outlined above, the mörä comprises two functional components; ‘x’, which is repeated three times, and ‘y’, which is repeated twice. Either or both of these components may be augmented or diminished within the rules examined in the previous section. Occasionally an artist will focus on a particular mörä structure in the course of a solo, playing a series of möräs that use as an aesthetic device a particular pattern of augmentation or diminution.

Some of the possibilities that arise naturally from the mörä form are seemingly ready-made for certain tālā contexts. For example, in rupaka tālā, or in tiśra gati ādi tālā, a motivic exploration in which one pulse is added to each ‘x’ figure will result in a three-pulse increase per mörä, a fact that will make the calculation of starting places less difficult than it might appear. The following series of möräs might result. Note that in all cases the total number of pulses is forty-eight. Since the initial mörä is eighteen pulses long, it will require a thirty-pulse antecedent figure. The next mörä, at twenty-one pulses, will require a

\[12\]

Like any other device, this one has levels of great subtlety. The reader is invited to examine Mani, cycles 88-92, for an exhaustive expansion in miśra gati using all five parts of the mörä.
twenty-seven pulse antecedent, and so on. The portion of the antecedent figure in { } is reduced by one pulse each time so that the whole is always one cycle. The added material in each 'x' is represented in bold type.
example 1

antecedent
{tam - -} din - ta - tan - gu {10}
{tam - -} din - ta - tan - gu {10}
{tam - -} din - ta - tan - gu {10}

mōrā ta ka di na (x=4)
 tam - - [y=3]
 ta ka di na (x=4)
 tam - - [y=3]
 ta ka di na (x=4)

example 2

antecedent
{tam -} din - ta - tan - gu {9}
{tam -} din - ta - tan - gu {9}
{tam -} din - ta - tan - gu {9}

mōrā ta ta ka di na (x=5)
 tam - - [y=3]
 ta ta ka di na (x=5)
 tam - - [y=3]
 ta ta ka di na (x=5)

example 3

antecedent
{ta} din - ta - tan - gu {8}
{ta} din - ta - tan - gu {8}
{ta} din - ta - tan - gu {8}

mōrā ta ka ta ka di na (x=6)
 tam - - [y=3]
 ta ka ta ka di na (x=6)
 tam - - [y=3]
 ta ka ta ka di na (x=6)
A motivic series such as this one does not require that every mōrā resolve at the ēruppu. Individual mōrās within such a series may resolve at half- or even quarter-cycle intervals. The final stage, however, in which the antecedent figure may have disappeared completely, must, like any other formal cadence, resolve at the ēruppu.

arudi

Up to this point in the discussion of mōrā, there has been an assumption that all such cadences will resolve to the sama or ēruppu. The third most important point in any tāḷa structure is arudi; in ādi tāḷa, this is beat five of the cycle in which an ēruppu resolution occurs. It is customary, but not absolutely necessary, for Karnāṭak drummers to follow major compositions in a tani āvartanam with a simple mōrā that resolves at this point. Especially when the ēruppu does not coincide with a clap, this cadence resolving on a clapped beat signals a firm re-entry into the tāḷa flow. In these pages, such a small mōrā will be referred to by the name arudi, except in cases of direct quotes by drummers who use the term differently.

The most powerful use of the mōrā takes place within the larger cadential structure called körvai; this form represents the most sophisticated rhythmic designs used in mṛdaṅgam playing.
körvai

As was the case with the discussion of mōrā, it will be helpful to use Brown as a point of departure. His glossary definition of körvai follows:

An elaborate cross-rhythmical concluding section of a drum solo, usually in some sort of tripartite division, in which the patterns of relatively slow-moving phrases against the underlying structure of the tāḷa cycle create a strong rhythmic tension that is resolved in the final cadence.\textsuperscript{13}

Since he was under the impression that the körvai only appeared at the very end of a solo, it is not surprising that Brown includes the discussion of it under the chapter title ‘The Final Mōrās’

Körvai is a Tamil word with the meaning “stringing, filing, arranging, a string of ornamental beads.” It consists of a stringing of rather widely spaced sounds in the tāḷa in an interesting cross-rhythmical arrangement. It is the most cross-rhythmical of any of the specific formal types of pattern found in drumming, longer and more interesting than the usual mōrā. Like the latter, it is ordinarily arranged in some kind of repetitive triple pattern. Each of its three sections is again most often subdivided into a triple arrangement of phrases.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13}v.1, p.338
\textsuperscript{14}v.1, p.264
Brown’s glossary definition was based on his analysis of the beginning lessons in each of five tālas, within a particular style of teaching.\textsuperscript{15} He refers to a class of compositions that bear the name ‘final kōrvai’ in this study. As will be evident in the analytic outlines that follow, a typical tani āvartanam may contain as many kōrvaïs as the drummer wishes to play. Usually, but not always, a kōrvaï will be used to separate or end large sections within a solo.

Kōrvais are rhythmic designs within the fabric of the tāla, and must be contemplated from three perspectives. In terms of chronology, the first of these is preparation. A kōrvaï may be heralded by the introduction of some of its component phrases in the cycles that precede its formal beginning. Depending on the relative importance of the kōrvaï and a great many other factors, including personal taste, the preparation may be quite elaborate.\textsuperscript{16} On the other hand, it may be non-existent; in such a case, the kōrvaï will stand out in sharp relief against the background material.\textsuperscript{17} A third possible preparation style may be described as ‘interweaving’. In this style the kōrvaï may flow so naturally from the preceding material that its beginning is deliberately obscured.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{15}Namely, that of Palani Subramania Pillai, of whom Brown’s teacher was a disciple. That kōrvais were taught only at the end of tāla lessons in this style is discussed in Sankaran Interview 1; see vol.2, p. 134.

\textsuperscript{16}In recent years there are even cases of such preparations being composed. For an example, see Mani, cycles 67-74

\textsuperscript{17}In the solos to follow, Murthy seems to have used this type of relief as a design principle throughout. Others seem to have used a variety of approaches.

\textsuperscript{18}This device is used to particularly subtle effect in Sankaran’s solo.
The second aspect of a körvai requiring contemplation is its *structure*, and it is here that Brown's account is insufficient. There are many possible körvai structures, only some of which are arranged in "repetitive triple patterns". There seem to be only two requirements for a rhythmic structure to be called a körvai. First, it must have at least two parts, and second, the last part must take one of the mörä forms outlined above. Most of the körvais that will be analyzed in the following sections will be shown to employ compound or unfolding mörä, and a large number have more than two parts. Some of the more common structures are as follows:

**The ta din gi ṭa tom**

This type of körvai can be easily and readily identified, since it is made up entirely of the syllables that form its name. Its form is usually that of an orderly gopucca reduction generated by incremental diminution of the spaces among the syllables from one stage to the next. This reduction often overlaps with the mörä, as the following figure shows. The actual figure used here is the phrase 'ta ka ta di ki ṭa tom', a common seven-pulse derivative of 'ta din gi ṭa tom'.

---

18 This must not be taken too literally. See footnote 2, p. 48 above.
In the example above, the phrase is reduced three pulses at a time; from sixteen, to thirteen, to ten, and finally to seven. The seven-pulse stage serves a double function as ‘x’ in the simple mūrā that completes this kūrvali.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{20}The example is from Raghu, kūrvali 5
The Two-part kōrvai

In the paradigm form of this type, there are two distinct sections that do not necessarily share any thematic material. Odd as it may seem, there is no generally accepted name for the opening section, though the second part is clearly in the mōrā form, and always referred to as such. Consensus among mṛdāṅgam players has it that earlier styles of playing made use of opening sections that were not necessarily orderly in any of the senses that are generally recognized nowadays. While the phrases may have made sense to the player, it was apparently not a requirement that they be arithmetically justified. As a very simple example, the following was the first kōrvai the author learned:

\[
\begin{align*}
ta & \quad - \quad tam \quad - \quad - \quad 6 \\
ta & \quad ka \quad tam \quad - \quad - \quad 5 \\
ta & \quad ki \quad ta \quad tam \quad - \quad - \quad 6 \\
mōrā \\
ta & \quad din \quad gi \quad nâ \quad tom \quad (x=5) [y=0] \\
ta & \quad din \quad gi \quad nâ \quad tom \quad (x=5) [y=0] \\
ta & \quad din \quad gi \quad nâ \quad tom \quad (x=5)
\end{align*}
\]

While the mōrā is entirely orderly, the introductory section seems to exist mainly in order to fill up the seventeen pulses that will make this kōrvai fit one cycle of oru kaḷai ādi tāḷa. In current practice, there is a strong preference among drummers for formal cogency of some sort throughout a composition, though older style kōrvais are still played by many well-respected musicians.\(^{21}\)

\(^{21}\)In this study, see Ramabhadran, kōrvais 1 & 3; also Raghu’s first turns in the koraippu section.
To demonstrate the kind of order that is preferred nowadays, the small körvai above could be slightly re-worked as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta} & \text{ tam} - - \{4\} \\
\text{ta} & \text{ ka} \text{ tam} - - \{5\} \\
\text{ta} & \text{ ki} \text{ ta} \text{ tam} - - \{6\} \\
\text{mōrā} & \\
\text{ta} & \text{ din gi} \text{ ŋa} \text{ tom} - (x=5) [y=1] \\
\text{ta} & \text{ din gi} \text{ ŋa} \text{ tom} - (x=5) [y=1] \\
\text{ta} & \text{ din gi} \text{ ŋa} \text{ tom} (x=5)
\end{align*}
\]

By the simple removal of two pulses from the first section and their insertion as 'y' figures in the mōrā, the körvai has been rendered orderly in the modern sense. Among the subjects of this study, the most unbending in terms of the demand for strictly arithmetical order is Karaikudi R. Mani. The following example\textsuperscript{22} exhibits orderly augmentation in both sections; the mōrā is in the unfolding form.

---

\textsuperscript{22}Mani, körvai 7
The lack of direct thematic contact between the sections in the two-part körvai can be used for heightened aesthetic effect: for example, by playing the mörä in a different gati from that in which the introductory section is played. Such devices will be examined in the analyses as they arise.

Another possibility within the two-part structure is a linkage of the mörä with the opening section by the familiar 'double-function' device, as in the following
composition; here, the last part of the introductory phrase becomes part of the first 'x' figure in the mōrā:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
ta \quad di \quad ta \quad ka \quad di \quad na \quad ta \quad \text{n-} \quad ta \quad k\text{ṭ}t\text{k} \quad tom \quad k\text{ṭ} \quad tom \\
di \quad ta \quad ka \quad di \quad na \quad ta \quad \text{n-} \quad ta \quad k\text{ṭ}t\text{k} \quad tom \quad k\text{ṭ} \quad tom \\
ta \quad ka \quad di \quad na \quad ta \quad \text{n-} \quad ta \quad k\text{ṭ}t\text{k} \quad tom \quad k\text{ṭ} \quad tom \\
\end{array}
\]

kōrvai example 3

The Three-part kōrvai

Some of the most complex kōrvais in this study fall into the three-part category, which most often represents a combination of the two-part and 'ta din gi ŋa tom' forms. In this structural type, an introductory section is

\[\text{23 Murthy, kōrvai1}\]
followed by an apparent mórā that turns out to be a bridge to the 'real' mórā. Perhaps the most involved example is this one, in which the introductory section comprises a five-stage incremental reduction followed by what at first appears to be a körvai in the 'ta din gi na tom' form. The third stage of the 'ta din gi na tom' turns out to be a 'bridge' into the compound mórā that completes the structure.²⁴

²⁴Raghu, körvai 1
körvai example 4
The Enfolded körvai

Example 5 below depicts yet another type of körvai structure; this type recalls the enfolded mörä, in that it is derived from the progressive diminution of a single phrase. In this case, the phrase is quite simple:

{tam -} {tam -} {ta din - gu} {ta - -} {din - - -}
körvai example 5
It is interesting to note that this composition may be understood as a körvai only because of the triple repetition of the final stage. Without this addition, the composition would be very clearly in the mōrā, rather than the körvai, form, since it happens to have three reductive stages.25

To this point in the discussion of körvai structure there has been attention only to the internal coherence and the quasi-spatial aspects of proportion, overlap, etc. There is another aspect of any körvai's structure that must be considered in order for it to be understood in the context of the tani āvartanam, namely its total duration. This may be reckoned in at least two ways; beat-sensitive and pulse-sensitive counting. The former assumes the akṣara to be the fundamental unit, and therefore requires that the gati and kaḷai be specified, while the latter is based on the simple pulse. If we examine körvai example 4 according to the former, and assume caturaśra gati and oru kaḷai, the total duration is forty-five akṣaras. This total is distributed among the three parts as $18\frac{3}{4}$, $7\frac{1}{2}$, and $18\frac{3}{2}$ akṣaras, respectively. If we adopt pulse-sensitive counting, the total is 180 pulses, divided 75, 30, and 75. By this method nothing more need be specified, except as context changes. It will be simpler for the purposes of this study to use the latter method, since it does not require fractional manipulations or the assumption of a particular context.26 The importance of the total duration

25A more extensive analysis of this composition, Sankaran körvai 2, may be found in the Sankaran Analysis.

26Both methods are used to great effect in the minute-to-minute business of performance. I am not claiming any inherent superiority for the pulse method, but it does seem to be easier to use in analysis.
of a körvai will become clear as we examine the third important feature of a körvai’s meaning, its *treatment*.

**Treatment**

The treatment of a körvai has to do with its use in a particular tāḷa context. This is a function of several considerations, some of which are inherent in the structure of an individual körvai. Others come into play because of properties of the system as a whole; in any case, it is in this area that mṛdaṅgam players come upon some of their most interesting and surprising discoveries. We will examine several facets of this phenomenon.

The most obvious and common possibilities for körvai treatment arise from the interplay of pulse total with tāḷa structure. The five tani āvarthanam examples analyzed in this study are all in reṇḍu kaḷai ādi tāḷa, and they take place in a kṛti composed in caturaśra gati. In this context, the basic aṁśara will comprise eight pulses; the eight-beat cycle, then, will be sixty-four pulses long. While nearly any körvai can be played in nearly any tāḷa, one may predict with some confidence that a survey of tani āvarthanams in reṇḍu kaḷai ādi tāḷa will show a large number of körvais whose pulse totals exist in some important relationship with sixty-four.

In fact, nine of the thirty-six körvais analyzed in this study comprise exactly twice that, or 128 pulses per repetition. If we examine the totals in terms of their
divisibility by eight, the number of beats per cycle, the relationship between tāḷa structure and kōrvai duration will be illuminated further.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pulses</th>
<th>divided by 8 (factored)</th>
<th>#of körvais</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>15 (5*3)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>168</td>
<td>21 (7*3)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>192</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>256</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of the seven körvais not accounted for in this table, one\textsuperscript{27} is apparently not subject to the notions of arithmetical order being discussed here. The remaining six fall neatly into two categories. In fact the same two drummers are responsible for all six; each is the sole proprietor of his category.

The first category is the property of Palghat Raghu, who used körvais totaling 180,\textsuperscript{28} 60,\textsuperscript{29} and 100 pulses.\textsuperscript{30} As the analysis of Raghu's tani will show, these compositions were all chosen because of their differences from standard ādi tāla applications. The first of these three, which is diagrammed above as körvai example 4, is played in three different gatis; caturaśra, or eight pulses per beat, khaṇḍa, or ten pulses per beat, and tiśra, or twelve pulses per beat. The sixty-pulse körvai\textsuperscript{31} is played three times in khaṇḍa gati, and is the subject of an elaborate preparation. The 100 pulse composition, again played three times in khaṇḍa gati, is the focus of yet another type of treatment. The three ten-beat repetitions are not played back to back, as is customary; instead, they are played from the same starting point in consecutive cycles.

The main feature of the second category is the alteration of material in order to reveal aspects of tāla structure. In T. K. Murthy's tani, three körvais are found

\textsuperscript{27}Ramabhadran, körvai 1

\textsuperscript{28}körvai 1

\textsuperscript{29}körvai 3

\textsuperscript{30}körvai 4
that fit this description; they are 196 32, 122 33, and 98 34 pulses respectively. In each case, material was added to a pre-existing composition in order that it could start from the sama, or another even beat, and resolve at the eḻuppū. In each case, this alteration set up demands concerning the number of times a kōrvai could be, or must be repeated.

Based on the factors that result from dividing pulse totals by eight, all five jāti/gatis are represented. It is certainly reasonable to expect that a ninety-six pulse kōrvai, for example, might be played in tiśra gati, in which it would occupy one full cycle, as well as in caturaśra, in which it would take one-and-a-half cycles. In fact, every ninety-six-pulse kōrvai analyzed in this study was played in tiśra gati, while one of the 192-pulse compositions was played in both tiśra and caturaśra. Any kōrvai that can be broken down into arithmetical factors that represent members of the five jāti/gatis may be used legitimately within any of them.

In addition, a kōrvai from one jāti/gati may be used in another, depending on the skill of the performer. For example, there are several examples in this study in which a 128-pulse kōrvai is played in tiśra gati, or twelve pulses per

31 kōrvai example 1 above
32 kōrvai 3
33 kōrvai 4
34 kōrvai 6
beat. Since there is no integral relationship between 128 and 12, the necessary relationship with tiśra gati must be generated by a triple repetition of the kōrvai.

**Number of Repetitions**

It is an axiom within Karnatak music that a kōrvai is to be played three times. Usually this is the case, even at the professional level. In the present study, twenty-two of the thirty-six kōrvais fit this pattern. With a few exceptions, notably the final kōrvai, it is also quite permissible to play a kōrvai only once. The reader will find twelve such cases here. The only choice not permitted is to play a kōrvai twice. There are apparent exceptions even to this rule; two of them may be found here. The source of this primacy of triple repetition is a worthy subject for contemplation, and possibly for future investigation. This emphasis on ‘three’ with respect to cadential structure, both internally—the mōrā within a kōrvai also contains a triple statement—and externally, exists in tension with the emphasis on ‘two’ with respect to the structure of the tāḷa field. This aspect of the relationship between the field and the behavior of the matter within it is of deep significance, though well beyond the scope of this study.

As was suggested above in the discussion of jāti/gati applications, the practice of triple repetition provides opportunities for altering the treatment of a kōrvai in successive statements. Indeed, some kōrvais appear to have been

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35 See the discussions of gati and kaḷai
composed with such alteration in mind. The following graphic representation shows such a composition, a 72-pulse körvai.35 The line over the pattern

shows the composition divided into twelve six-pulse groups, while the line below

shows it divided into eight nine-pulse groups.

---

35 This is Ramabhadran, körvai 3. He actually plays it in caturaśra, followed by two speeds of tiśra.
As can be seen in the analysis of this körvai below, the phrases do not fit nearly as conveniently with the beats in caturaśra gati as they do in tiśra or śaṅkīṇa. Furthermore, they do not follow a formally rigorous reduction or expansion. The phrases seem to have been arranged as they are largely for
ease of performance in tiśra or śaṅkīrṇa, rather than for the expression of any particular design; in fact, they invite such treatment.

The preceding pages are by no means an exhaustive account of all the possibilities inherent in the preparation, structure and treatment of the kōrvai form. As each individual composition is analyzed in the pages to follow, it will be taken on its own terms, with indications as to how it differs from consensus definitions where it came from, and other possibilities that arise from it. It will also be analyzed in terms of its relationship with the tāḷa- and akṣara-structure, an aspect that has been left out of the discussion of form in order to avoid confusion.

There are two manifestations of kaṇṇakkū that will be dealt with in other sections. The first, koraippu, is peculiar to situations in which there is more than one drummer. The reader will find an explanation of this form, along with a dazzling example, in the Raghu Analysis, cycles 123-159. The other kaṇṇakkū device left for later is the Long Mōrā, which will be described in the following section on the structure of the tani āvartanam.
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The Structure of the tani āvartanam

At this point the broad outlines of the use of rhythmic devices within the taḷa context have been laid out to the extent that the structure of the tani āvartanam may be examined. While there is considerable room for variation on this structure, all five tanis analyzed here may be thought of as having three large sections: an introductory, or vilamba kāla section, a longer madhyama kāla section, including the concentration on at least one gati other than catuṣṭra, and an ending section\(^1\) that includes the long mōrā and a final kōrvai.

vilamba kāla

The easiest way to identify the sections of a tani āvartanam is by attention to the basic movement of the sarvalaghu figures used within them. In general, such patterns will move at the rate of two pulses per mātra in the first section. This is by no means to say that no other pulses will be played, but they will usually not be accented so as to draw attention to them until the madhyama kāla section. Excepted from this two-per-mātra feel are the suffixes that end

\[^1\] I have resisted the use of the term 'druta kāla' for the last section—the use of the other two kāla names is meant to show a relationship in their basic sarvalaghu patterns that is not shared by the last section.
quarter-, half-, and full-cycles at this stage. These suffix figures introduce rhythmic phrases that always have the potential to become formal cadences.

There may be several small mūrās in this section of a solo. In general, they will lead up to a kūrvaī that has a transitional function. While there is a large improvisational component in mṛdaṅgam playing, kūrvaīs are very seldom composed on the spot. They may have been composed by the drummer's guru, by the drummer himself, or by another drummer. In any case, the kūrvaī that marks a transition point will usually be an 'important' one, either in terms of its structure, its compositional origin, or its aesthetic meaning to the drummer. The transitional kūrvaī is more likely than any other to be followed by a secondary cadence resolving on the arudi.

madhyama kāla

The sarvalaghu patterns used in this section of the solo are likely to bear a more complex relationship with the akṣara structure than those used in the preceding section. As was stated above, madhyama kāla sarvalaghu patterns in caturaśra gati are likely to be organized into eight-pulse groups, with accents possible on any of the pulses in the akṣara. As was the case with the slow kāla patterns in the previous section, a variety of suffixes and cadential phrase-endings may be employed, for variation as well as for introducing the formal cadences.
Again, various cadential figures, such as mōrās, kōrvais, and motivic figures may be interspersed throughout this section. An important difference between this and the previous section is that the madhyama kāla section is likely to include several important transitions, including at least one leading to an exploration of another gāti.

The transition to another gāti may be accomplished by any of several devices. There are three different types used in the solos under study here: the subdivision may be changed gradually, by alternating sarvalaghu patterns in the origin and destination gātis; it may occur during the performance of a kōrvai of compound jāti, or it may be done suddenly, without any warning or apparent preparation. Each of the three methods will be examined in turn.

The first device, the use of alternating sarvalaghu patterns, was apparently pioneered by Palani Subramania Pillai. This device involves the use of a pattern in the origin gāti that is alternated with a recognizably similar pattern in the destination gāti. This alternation may go on for several beats, or even cycles, before the destination gāti is firmly established. For example, the eight-pulse pattern,

\[ \text{jo nu ta na ta ta jo nu} \]

may have two pulses added to it, generating the following ten-pulse derivative

\[ \text{jo nu ta na ta ta jo nu ta ka} \]
In the alternation method, these two patterns are played in consecutive beats or groups of beats, each filling up its respective section. In other words, the eight-pulse pattern requires an eight-pulse beat or a group of eight-pulse beats, and the ten-pulse pattern requires a ten-pulse beat or a group of ten-pulse beats. In the diagram below, the beats are represented by the lines above the two sets of syllables, while the subdivisions are represented by the shapes below the syllables.

In the analyses to follow, Raghu and Sankaran both make use of this device for their transitions to khaṇḍa gati, while Mani uses a device inspired by this one for his change to míśra.

Another possible device for changing gatis is to use a kōrvai that begins in the origin gati and ends in the destination gati. The possibility of playing a kōrvai in different gatis in its three repetitions has been examined above. In the present group, Ramabhadran uses a saṅkīrṇa jāti kōrvai as a transition to tiśra gati.

---

The reader is reminded that the beats, while they contain more syllables, are of equal duration. The effect on the listener will be of hearing the second pattern played faster than the first.
The third possibility, the sudden change, is used to great effect by Sankaran for his transition to tiśra gati. He moves directly from densely-articulated caturaśra gati sarvalaghu patterns to extremely sparsely-articulated tiśra gati patterns.

Once the shift of subdivision has taken place, a relatively detailed exposition may be expected. Again, mōrās, kōrvais, and motivic ideas will be unfolded according to the demands and possibilities of the moment.

The same possibilities examined above will apply to the next transition, which may be back to caturaśra gati, or to yet another gati. There is no fixed structure here, so it is up to the mṛdaṅgam player to signal the ensemble and the audience that the end of his solo is approaching. This is the business of the elaborate ending section.

**Ending Section**

In contrast with the first two sections, the ending section is usually characterized not so much by semi-melodic sarvalaghu patterns, but by much more densely articulated, generally louder patterns made up of a much higher percentage of strokes played on the black spot. These patterns, called parans, are often from the earliest days of a drummer's study. They tend to be more
physically than intellectually demanding; their principal function is to signal the end of the tani āvartanam.

The fact that the duration of a tani āvartanam is up to the drummer means, among other things, that the end must be unmistakable so that the other members of the ensemble know when to come in. The underlying form of the pārtiya, or long (lit. "big"), mōrā is meant to be immediately recognizable even if the particular composition is new. For this reason, it is usually the case that the long mōrā will be chosen that is in an integral relationship with the given tāḷa setting. That is, it will usually total two or four cycles of the tāḷa, eḍuppu-to-eḍuppu. This is the case in four of the five solos analyzed in the next section. In addition, it will usually take the following form, where all elements have the same duration:

\[
\begin{align*}
A1 & \quad A2 \quad A1 \quad B \\
A1 & \quad A2 \quad A1 \quad B \\
A1 & \quad A2 \quad A1 \quad B/2 \\
A1 & \quad B/2 \\
A1 & + mōrā \text{ (2B in duration)}
\end{align*}
\]

The most common ādi tāḷa version of this form goes as follows:
di - - - tan - gi ḏu di ku ta ka ta ri gi ḏu (A1-16 pulses)  
di - di - tan - gi ḏu di ku ta ka ta ri gi ḏu (A2-16 pulses)  
di - - - tan - gi ḏu di ku ta ka ta ri gi ḏu (A1-16 pulses)  
tom - ta - tam - - ta tom - ta - tam - - - (B-16 pulses)  

di - - - tan - gi ḏu di ku ta ka ta ri gi ḏu (A1-16 pulses)  
di - di - tan - gi ḏu di ku ta ka ta ri gi ḏu (A2-16 pulses)  
di - - - tan - gi ḏu di ku ta ka ta ri gi ḏu (A1-16 pulses)  
tom - ta - tam - - ta tom - ta - tam - - - (B-16 pulses)  

di - - - tan - gi ḏu di ku ta ka ta ri gi ḏu (A1-16 pulses)  
tom - ta - tam - - - (B/2-8 pulses)  

di - - - tan - gi ḏu di ku ta ka ta ri gi ḏu (A1-16 pulses)  
tom - ta - tam - - - (B/2-8 pulses)  

di - - - tan - gi ḏu di ku ta ka ta ri gi ḏu (A1-16 pulses)  
mōrā  
tom - ta - tom - ta - (x=8)  
tam - - - [y=4]  
tom - ta - tom - ta - (x=8)  
tam - - - [y=4]  
tom - ta - tom - ta - (x=8) {256 pulses}  

The periya mōrā form bears a strong resemblance to the enfolded mōrā form described above, as the following graphic example shows:
It is perhaps this enfolded structure that makes the long mōrā so obvious as the penultimate composition in a tani āvartanām. As is the case with most
kōrvaīs, the long mōrā is almost always memorized, rather than composed on
the spot. It is always followed immediately by the final kōrvaī.

**Final kōrvaī**

The final kōrvaī may be in any of the kōrvaī forms outlined above. Usually, but not always it will begin on the eḻuppu. As with all other parts of the solo, aesthetic concerns may well generate exceptions even to this. Only two features are absolutely required of a final kōrvaī: that it be repeated three times so that the ensemble may re-enter accurately, and that its final repetition resolve unmistakably on the eḻuppu.

The reader/listener is by now equipped with the tools necessary to understand the five analyses to follow. The tāḷa structure, the general rhythmic activities, and the structure of the tani āvartanam have all been sufficiently outlined. One must be aware that each of the specific performances analyzed in the next section has its own aesthetic logic. Where there is a conflict between what is played and what is written, the played may always be taken as the final truth.

The tani āvartanam is the play of great improvisers and innovators in the present moment, in deep contemplation of the unity of tāḷa and phrase. The difficulty of certain passages and compositions is a way for these masters to test their understanding and deepen their insights. The ease and beauty of others
gives them and us great enjoyment. The reader is invited to allow his or her mind to wander through these solos, attending by turns to flow, design, and sound.
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Part Two:

Analysis of Five tani āvartanams
INTRODUCTION TO PART TWO

Part Two comprises analytic outlines of the five tani āvartanams found on the videotape that is included with this study. Their structures follow the form described in Part One; each proceeds from a vilamba kāla stage to madhyama kāla, and finally to an Ending Section. I have attempted to show, as much as possible, the connections among the five, as well as their differences, by referring the reader to relevant sections of the interviews, transcriptions, and videotape.

Whenever possible, I confirmed my analysis of each passage with the person who played it. If this was not possible, I did the analysis entirely on my own. In no case did I consult any of the five drummers about something another one had played. My attitude throughout has been as if I had five jewels to examine; each catches the light differently, is a different color, size and shape from the others, and each has delighted me since I first heard it.

On the subject of the notation used to represent what was played, I have used each drummer's own solkaṭṭu wherever possible. When this was not possible, I used solkaṭṭu that seemed appropriate to me. In the interest of consistency throughout this study, I have used the same conventions to represent rhythmic values in all three Volumes, as follows:
Unit time, or pulse-level articulation, is represented by a consonant followed by a vowel; thus the phrase

\[\text{ta ka di mi}\]

comprising four pulses, can occupy one mātra—one beat in oru kaḷai in caturaśra gati. Double time is represented by removing the vowels and removing half the space among syllables, as follows:

\[t \ k \ d \ m \ t \ k \ d \ m\]

One further doubling is possible if all spaces are removed:

\[tkdm \ tkdm \ tkdm \ tkdm\]

A short dash (−) following a syllable lengthens its duration by one syllable. To continue with the same example, the following four speeds may all be said to occupy two mātras: one beat in reṇḍu kaḷai in caturaśra gati.

\[\text{ta - ka - di - mi -}\]

\[\text{ta ka di mi ta ka di mi}\]

\[t \ k \ d \ m \ t \ k \ d \ m \ t \ k \ d \ m\]

\[tkdm \ tkdm \ tkdm \ tkdm \ tkdm \ tkdm \ tkdm \ tkdm\]

With respect to beat-markings, a double bold vertical line, ||, is used to designate every sama. A single bold line, |, designates any other full beat, and a simple vertical line, |, designates the second mātra in each beat. The reader will notice that not every analyzed example is marked in this fashion. In cases where a composition or pattern is played in more than one tāḷa context, for
example in more than one gati, I have excluded these markings. I have also
excluded them when I felt they would be visually distracting.
RAMABHADRAN ANALYSIS

TOTAL CYCLES: 77
TOTAL TIME: 12'2"
AVERAGE BPM: 51
FIRST MINUTE: 46
LAST MINUTE: 53

Vilamba Kāla: cycles 1-15

Ramabhadran begins with the traditional ādi tāḷa pattern

ta - din - din - ṇa -
ta ka din - din - ṇa -

He plays it through the middle of cycle 4, where he begins an exposition of the Palani Subramania Pillai composition (00:33). The opening lines are in the form universally attributed to Palani Subramania Pillai.¹

ltam - - di lta ka din - ldin - din - lna - kṭ t k
tom ta ka tom lta ka din - ltam - tam - ldim - - -

¹For a full exposition in Palani Subramania Pillai’s own style, see Sankaran, cycles 21-27.
but with slight variations, as follows:

\[ \text{ldin} \quad - \quad - \quad \text{lt} \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{din} \quad - \quad \text{ldin} \quad - \quad \text{na} \quad - \quad \text{lt} \quad r \quad g \quad \text{ḍ} \quad \text{din} \quad - \]
\[ \text{ltom} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{tom} \quad \text{lt} \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{din} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{lk} \quad \text{tu} \quad \text{tam} \quad - \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ldin} \quad - \quad - \]

this is repeated three times, the second and third without the initial ‘din’; each takes four beats, or an even half-cycle. In cycle 6 he begins a reduction of the pattern to three-and-a-half beat (seven mātra) groups (00:48):

\[ \quad - \quad - \quad \text{lt} \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{din} \quad - \quad \text{ldin} \quad - \quad t \quad r \quad g \quad \text{ḍ} \]
\[ \text{ltom} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{tom} \quad \text{lt} \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{din} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{lk} \quad \text{tu} \quad \text{tam} \quad - \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ldin} \quad - \quad - \]

this is played twice, following which he reduces it even further (00:55):
This figure is used as a cadential figure to introduce the first eḻuppu, in cycle 9 (1:16), though it is not, strictly speaking, in the mōrā form. Its cadential effect is the result of the fact that it begins on the last beat of the cycle, or twelve pulses before the eḻuppu. He generates a slight rhythmic tension by using four three-pulse phrase groups to fill the three four-pulse mātras, as the following drawing shows:
The next sarvalaghu pattern is based on

\[
\text{ta - din - ta - din -}
\]

| N | O | N | O |
| G | O | G | O |

It is played as above through cycles 9 & 10, then with the rests filled up by alternating 'nams' (1:16);

\[
\text{ta na di na ta na di na}
\]

| N | n | O | n | N | n | O | n |
| G | O | G | O |  |  |  |  |
Körvai 1

preparation

The preparation of körvai 1 is somewhat ambiguous. In fact, it is not possible to discuss this composition in the same terms as any of the other körvais in this study. Rather than speaking about it as a preparation in the normal sense, it will be helpful to delineate sections of what is played and examine them structurally and functionally without an attempt to fit the sections into any of the standard körvai molds. It must be borne in mind that, especially in this case, the representations of form are entirely the work of the analyst, and not of Ramabhadran.

structure

The change from sarvalaghu to cadential design begins after three-eighths of beat 7, cycle 12 (1:51), and has four sections; section A, section B, section C, and the final large mōrā. A provisional notation follows:
Sections A and C could be analyzed in the standard 'x y x y x' form, with section B as a transition between them as follows:
While sections ‘A’ and ‘C’ may be understood as small mōrās, it is not likely that any large design is to be revealed here. Instead, the first three sections appear to function as small cadences leading up to the larger figure to which I refer as the mōrā. Ramabhadran’s use of materials that imitate cadential designs without actually developing into them is apparently unique to him and occurs at other points in the solo. He even has a name for it, kalpana solkaṭṭu.²

The mōrā is in a compound form with three layers of organization; each ‘x’ section may be recognized as a smaller mōrā in which (x=10), and [y=0] The overall structure may be represented as follows: (x=30 \{10,10,10\}), [y=2] in the third line of the last ‘ta di ki ta tom’, the second half of the ten-pulse line, is

²vol. 2, p.150
substituted for the figure 'ta - - tom -', which gives the effect of another, even smaller mōrā nested within the third 'x'; thus

\[(x=\{10,10,10\})\]
\[\text{[y=2]}\]
\[(x=\{10,10,10\})\]
\[\text{[y=2]}\]
\[(x=\{10,5+5,5,5\})\]

In our discussion of kōrvai 1, Ramabhadran referred only to this section as the kōrvai:

DN: That part is the kōrvai. Then what about the things leading up to it?

VR: Yes, I will tell you. These are all small kōrvais...varieties, concluding like this.\(^3\)

In the larger mōrā each 'y' figure is two pulses long. It occurs to this writer that there is at least one other way to put the ideas together that are represented in this kōrvai in order to enhance the effect of the 'ta tom - ta - tom -' phrase with which it begins. For example:

---

\(^3\text{vol. 2, p.153}\)
I- ta tom -
Ita - tom -
Ita tom -
ta l- tom -
ta ltom -

ta - l- tom - ta ldi ki ta tom
Ita - - tom l- ta di ki Ita tom
Ita - - tom l- ta di ki Ita tom
Ita - I- tom - ta ldi ki ta tom
Itam -
ta - l- tom - ta ldi ki ta tom
Ita - - tom l- ta di ki Ita tom
Ita - - tom l- ta di ki Ita tom
Ita di lki ta tom
ta ldi ki ta tom [tam]

This example is 112 pulses in duration and thus is divisible by four and seven. It has one unusual feature, in that it begins with one pulse of silence.⁴

A related example would be quite short, and take six beats (48 pulses)

⁴For another example of this, see Murthy's final körvai.
Ramabhadran's version is evidence of his avowed lack of interest in sophisticated arithmetic manipulations. His 'körvai' is functional to the extent that everybody who hears it recognizes it as a cadential figure. There is no denying the grace and beauty with which he executes it, but it seems not to bear a noticeable relation to any of the consensus definitions of the form. My suggested alternatives are to be seen not as improvements, but as a more 'usual' application of the material.

**treatment**

Körvai 1 is played only once, resolving to the eḻuppu, cycle 15.

---

\(^5\)vol. 2, p.27
Madhyama Kāla; cycles 15-53 (2:14)

From cycle 15 through the first half of cycle 17, the dominant sarvalaghū pattern is based on

\[
\begin{array}{llllllll}
\text{rin} & \text{ta} & \text{ṇa} & \text{ta} & \text{jo} & \text{nu} & \text{jo} & \text{nu} \\
0 & N & n & T & T & O & n & O \\
0 & O & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0
\end{array}
\]

this is followed in cycle 17 by a change to

\[
\begin{array}{llllllllll}
\text{ta} & \text{jo} & \text{nu} & \text{ta} & \text{ṇa} & \text{ta} & \text{jo} & \text{nu} & \text{ta} & \text{ṇa} & \text{ta} & \text{jo} & \text{nu} & \text{tam} & k & t & t & k \\
N & O & n & N & n & T & O & n & N & n & T & O & n & N & 3 & 1 & 3 \\
0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & X
\end{array}
\]

In cycles 18 and 19 (2:47), khaṇḍa gati phrases are briefly introduced, but not developed:\(^6\)

\[
\begin{array}{llllllllll}
\text{jo} & \text{ṇu} & \text{ta} & \text{jo} & \text{ṇu} & \text{ta} & \text{ṇa} & \text{ta} & \text{jo} & \text{ṇu}
\end{array}
\]

alternates with the caturaśra gati pattern

\(^6\)This may be another nōmāge to Pafani Subramania Pillai. See also Sankaran and Raghu's changes to khaṇḍa gati.
In the second half of cycle 19, the following pattern is introduced

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{ta} \ \text{ña} \ \text{ta} \ \text{di} \ \text{ta} \ \text{ña} \ \text{ta} \ \text{di} \\
&\text{N} \ \text{N} \ \text{T} \ \text{O} \ \text{N} \ \text{n} \ \text{T} \ \text{O} \\
&\text{O} \ \text{O} \ \text{O} \ \text{O} \ \text{O}
\end{align*}
\]

**Miśra gati; cycles 21-27**

Beginning in cycle 21 (3:11), the above pattern is abruptly transformed into its miśra gati counterpart,

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{ltan} \ \text{- -} \ \text{ta} \ \text{- di} \ \text{- lтан} \ \text{- gu} \ \text{ta} \ \text{- di} \ \text{-} \\
&\text{N} \ \text{T} \ \text{O} \ \text{N} \ \text{n} \ \text{T} \ \text{O} \\
&\text{O} \ \text{O} \ \text{O} \ \text{O} \ \text{O}
\end{align*}
\]

This is alternated with the cadential phrase

\[
\text{lta - ka din - ki ta lta ki ta ta ka di na}
\]

as follows:
{tam - - ta - di -} {tan - gu ta - di -} 
{ta - ka din - ki ṭa} {ta ki ṭa ta ka di na}

Each of these fourteen-pulse lines may now be reduced by half;

{tan - gu ta - di -} {ta ki ṭa ta ka di na}

In cycle 23, the reduction is continued;

{tom - - - - ta ka} {ta ki ṭa ta ka di na}
{tom - - - - ta ka} {ta ki ṭa ta ka di na}
{tom - - - ta ka}
{tom - - - ta ka}
{tom - - - ta ka}
{tom - - - ta ka}
tom - - - ta - di - ki - ṭa - tom

Körvai 2

preparation

The reduction above is used as the preparation for körvai 2. The nine-pulse figure

ta - di - ki - ṭa - tom

will function in the körvai as the 'x' figure in the mōrā.
structure

This körvai may be seen as comprising three sections:

Section A
\[\text{lt}a -\text{ta - di -}\]
\[\text{lt}a \text{ ka - din - ta -}\]
\[\text{lt}a -\text{ta di ki lṭa tom}\]
\[\quad \text{ta di ki ūta tom}\]

\[\text{lt}a \text{ ka - ta - di -}\]
\[\text{lt}a \text{ ka - din - ta -}\]
\[\text{lt}a -\text{ta di ki lṭa tom}\]
\[\quad \text{ta di ki ūta tom}\]

Section B
\[\text{lt}a -\text{ta - di -}\]
\[\text{lt}a \text{ ka - din - ta -}\]

\[\text{lt}a \text{ ka - ta - di -}\]
\[\text{lt}a \text{ ka - din - ta -}\]
\[\text{mōrā}\]
\[\{\text{ta - di - ki - ūta - tom}\]
\[\quad \text{ta - di - ki - ūta - tom}\]
\[\quad \text{ta - di - ki - ūta - tom}\]

A careful reader/listener will find an anomaly here. In order for this körvai to be arithmetically sound, it must comprise 112 pulses (16*7). It has only 111.

Ramabhadran begins the final mōrā,

\[\text{ta - di - ki - ūta - tom}\]
\[\text{ta - di - ki - ūta - tom}\]
\[\text{ta - di - ki - ūta - tom}\]
exactly beginning on the second half of the seventh beat in all three repetitions (3:39, 3:49, and 3:58). To be precise, he is playing twenty-seven pulses in two beats, which is not miśra gati; this would require twenty-eight pulses.

Is it a mistake? Apparently so, but not a casual, or even unaesthetic one. The pattern has been distorted slightly so that it begins on a mātra, with the result that only an educated listener would question it. From the point of view of superficial comfort, he has in fact improved it. He attributes the körvai to Palghat Mani Iyer. Ranga taught it to me as follows:

| lṭa - - ta - di - | lṭa - ta - di - | lṭa ka - ta - di - |
| lṭa ka - tom - ta - | lṭa ka - tom - ta - | lṭa ka - tom - ta - |
| lṭom - ta tom - | lṭom - ta tom - | lṭom - ta tom - |
| ta - lḍi - ta di ki ṭa tom | ta - lḍi - ta di ki ṭa tom | ta - lḍi - ta di ki ṭa tom |

mōrā

| ta - di - ki - lṭa - tom | ta - di - lki - ṭa - tom | ta - lḍi - ki - ṭa - tom |
The differences between the two are small enough that when I recited this for Ramabhadrān he called it ‘the same’. Yet there is one crucial difference; the second version has one more pulse, immediately preceding the mōrā. This way, the first of the three mūres begins one pulse after the mātra, rather than right on it, and the whole kōrvāi now lasts a tidy 112 pulses, and can be justified as mīsra gati.

This is not a musician who is taken lightly, but rather one who has not much interest in the calculative side of the tradition. He accompanies only artists of the highest caliber, and is loved by them and by audiences as an accompanist of great sensitivity. Mrdaṅgam players have developed quite sophisticated arithmetical and proportional designs; most of them measure their command of their materials according to how well they are able to maintain arithmetical purity.

Nevertheless, not every pattern is executed exactly the way it was conceived. Even in the rarefied logical atmosphere shared by Mani and Raghu, there are anomalies to which the musicians themselves refer as mistakes.8

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7 vol. 2, p.153

8 For example, Mani solo, cycle 105 ff. See the Mani Analysis for an account of his recovery; also Raghu solo, cycles 123-4.
treatment

The körvai begins at the eduppu, cycle 24, and is repeated three times; each repetition is one cycle.

Return to caturaśra gati; cycles 27-34 (4:07)

The return to caturaśra gati is sudden, without arudi. There are four basic sarvalaghu patterns used in the next section. First,

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
ta & ta & ka & din - ta & din - \\
N & O & n & O \\
G & G & G & G
\end{array}
\]

which is filled out in the variation beginning at the end of cycle 27.

\[
\begin{array}{ccccccc}
ta & pa & ta & di & pa & ta & di & pa \\
N & O & O & n & O & O & O & n \\
G & G & G & G & G & G & G
\end{array}
\]

this is further varied by the phrase

\[
\begin{array}{ccccccc}
ta & ta & ka & to & m & ta & ka & di & na \\
N & O & O & 3 & O & O & 3 \\
G & G & G & G & G & G
\end{array}
\]
which is used first as a finishing phrase in the half-cycles 28 (4:26-beats 4 and 8) and 29 (beat 4 only), and then continuously through the second half of cycle 29. In cycle 30 (4:35), it changes to

\[
\text{tam\ ta\ ka\ to\ m\ ta\ din\ -\ -}\ \\
-\ \text{ta\ ka\ to\ m\ ta\ din\ k\ t\ t\ k}
\]

I am grouping all these together because of the common division as three, three and two:

\[
\text{tan\ ta\ ka\ \ din\ -\ ta\ \ din\ -}\ \\
\text{ta\ na\ ta\ \ di\ na\ ta\ \ di\ na}\ \\
\text{tam\ ta\ ka\ \ to\ m\ ta\ ka\ \ di\ na}
\]

The next pattern is stated twice in cycle 30

\[
\text{ta\ ṇa\ ta\ ṇa\ ta\ din\ -\ -}\ \\
-\ -\ \text{ta\ ṇa\ ta\ din\ -\ -}
\]

In cycle 31 there is a reprise of

\[
\text{ta\ ṇa\ ta\ di\ ta\ ṇa\ ta\ di}
\]

followed by a double-time pattern
This may be seen as following the three-three-two structure found above, in a further filled out version.

\[
\text{din} \ j \ n \ t \ n \ \text{din} - \ j \ n \ t \ n \ t \ n
\]

Arguments could certainly be made for other groupings,\(^9\) e.g.

\[
\text{din} \ j \ n \ t \ n \ \text{din} - \ j \ n \ t \ n \ t \ n
\]

or

\[
\text{din} \ j \ n \ \text{t} \ n \ \text{din} - \ j \ n \ t \ n \ t \ n
\]

I have chosen my grouping based on the subsequent introductory elaboration,

\[
t \ \text{lăn} \ g \ t \ n
\]

which appears at the beginning of each two-beat group in the second half of cycle 32 (5:02),

\[
t \ \text{lăn} \ g \ t \ n \ \text{din} - \ j \ n \ t \ n \ t \ n
\]
\[
\text{din} \ j \ n \ t \ n \ \text{din} - \ j \ n \ t \ n \ t \ n
\]

---

\(^9\)Brown has gone into the inherent ambiguity of phrase groupings. See v.1, p. 166-7
in the first beat of cycle 33 in the following form (5:07).

\[ t \, l\bar{a}n \, g \, t \, \check{n} \, t \, l\bar{a}n \, g \, t \, \check{n} \, t \, l\bar{a}n \, g \]

This is followed by a sarvalaghu pattern composed of variations on

\[ jo \, n\check{u} \, ta \, jo \, n\check{u} \, ta \, jo \, n\check{u} \]
\[ ta \, n\check{a} \, ta \, jo \, n\check{u} \, tam \, k\check{t} \, t \, k \]

These patterns continue until the middle of beat 6, cycle 34, where körvai 6 begins.

\bf{Körvai 3; transition to tiśra gati}

\bf{preparation}

Körvai 3 is begun, as were the previous two compositions, with no preparation. It starts midway through beat six, cycle 34 (5:21).

\bf{structure}

The körvai has a somewhat irregular structure. It appears to have two parts, a four-stage reduction, and a simple mōrā. The reduction, while clear enough, is not entirely orderly. It has the sound, in solkaṭṭu, of an archaic form, possibly derived from the bharata nātyam tradition. In fact, Ramabhadran himself confirmed this impression:
This körvai was by my father. It is from the time of Nayana Pillai and the 'full bench'. They used to play this körvai.\textsuperscript{10}

The notation is as follows; the solkaṭṭu is Ramabhadran's:\textsuperscript{11}

\begin{verbatim}
ta - hu  ṭa jem - 
ta ki ṭa jem - {11}
ta di ta ki ṭa ta ki ṭa 
jem - {10}
ta di ta ki ṭa ta ka 
jem - {9}
ta di ki ṭa ta ki 
ta - - {9}
mōrā 
ta di ki ṭa tom - t d k ṭ tom (x=9) 
    ta - - [y=3] 
ta di ki ṭa tom - t d k ṭ tom (x=9) 
    ta - - [y=3] 
ta di ki ṭa tom - t d k ṭ tom (x=9) 
\end{verbatim}

\textbf{treatment}

The körvai comprises 72 pulses in each of the three repetitions; the first, in caturaśra gati (eight pulses per beat—5:21) takes nine beats; the second, in slow tiśra gati (six per beat—5:32) takes twelve beats, and the third, in fast tiśra gati (twelve pulses per beat—5:46) takes six beats, or twenty-seven altogether.
An interesting process is at work here. If the kőrvai were performed three times at the original speed, the total duration of the three repetitions would also be twenty-seven beats. Arithmetically this is obvious, but Ramabhadran is using an embodied, or sounded arithmetic wherein the conceptually obvious may be musically striking.

When recited or played, the effect on the mind is of time slowing down and speeding up, yet according to orderly proportions. The effect of order is heightened by the choice of a composition that has 12 as one of its factors, since all three repetitions begin and end coincidentally with mātras. This is a convenient, but by no means necessary choice. Literally any kőrvai, and indeed any phrase or composition played three times can be processed in this manner. Ramabhadran seems to share with Mani a strong preference for compositions that coincide with mātras, for his own comfort, for ease in tāla-keeping, and for accessibility to the audience.

The following is a graphic approximation of the auditory effect of the multiple-speed treatment of kőrvai 3. In the example below, type sizes have been changed to simulate slowing-down and speeding-up.
Ramabhadran seems to favor this sort of device as a transition to the tiśra gati section of a solo. In the First Interview, he recited the following körvai,
which has an analogous structure, but is sixty pulses (5*12) rather than seventy-two (6*12) long.

\[
\text{lt}a\text{ - h}a\text{ t}a\text{ l}jem\text{ - ta ri l}ta\text{ - -}
\text{ta l}jem\text{ - ta ri l}ta\text{ - ta ka}
\text{l}ta\text{ di mi ta l}ka\text{ ta ki ta l}ta\text{ ki mörā}
\text{ta ka l}di\text{ ku - ta l}di\text{ ki ta tom}
\text{l}ta\text{ ka di ku l - ta di ki l}ṭa\text{ tom}
\text{ta ka l}di\text{ ku - ta l}di\text{ ki ta tom}
\]

\*tiśram (slow)\*
\text{lt}a\text{ - ha l}ta\text{ j}em\text{ - l}ta\text{ ri ta l - -}
\text{ta l}jem\text{ - ta l}ṛi ta\text{ - l}ta\text{ ka}
\text{ta l}di\text{ mi ta l}ka\text{ ta ki lṭa\text{ ta ki mörā}
\text{lt}a\text{ ka di l}ku\text{ - ta l}di\text{ ki ta l}ṭom
\text{ta ka l}di\text{ ku - l}ta\text{ di ki lṭa\text{ tom}
\text{ta l}ka\text{ di ku l - ta di l}ki\text{ ta tom}

\*tiśram (fast)\*
\text{ta - ha ta j}em\text{ - l}ta\text{ ri ta - -}
\text{ta l}jem\text{ - ta ri ta - l}ta\text{ ka}
\text{ta di mi ta l}ka\text{ ta ki ta ta ki mörā}
\text{lt}a\text{ ka di ku - ta l}di\text{ ki ta tom
\text{ta ka l}di\text{ ku - ta di ki lṭa\text{ tom
\text{ta ka di ku l - ta di ki ta tom [ta]

Both körvaiś share one additional characteristic that expands the range of their potential application. Each of them is a member of three of the five jāti/gatis. Thus the seventy-two pulse körvai could also be used in śaṅkīraṇa gati (9 pulses per beat) as well as in caturaśra and tiśra gatis, and the sixty-pulse körvai would work in khaṇḍa gati. The śaṅkīraṇa composition
has the further possibility of being used to reveal the proportional analogy

4:6:9

Again, it is one thing to say that 6 is to 4 as 9 as 6; it is quite another to hear it performed.

**Tiṣra gati sarvalaghu; cycles 38-50**

Following the course he has established in earlier stages, Ramabhadran begins with a very sparse pattern (5:53):

```
   din - - - ta -
   din - - - ta -
   din - - - ta -
```

which he repeats until the end of each half of cycle 38, with the finishing suffix:

```
   tom ta ka tom ta ka di na
```

In cycle 39 he repeats this combination of figures, but uses the suffix at the ends of beats three and five, rather than at the ends of half-cycles. It will be seen from comparison with the other tanis that cadencing at places other than half-, quarter-, or eighth-cycles (or their corresponding āṭuppu-shifted points) is unusual unless it is used to herald a motif or composition. Again, Ramabhadran seems to follow his own muse without much regard for consensus, though he does nothing to disrupt the smooth flow of the rhythm.
In beat 6 of cycle 39, he introduces a new pattern

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{din} & - - - \text{din} - \text{ta} - \text{din} - - - \\
- - - - \text{din} & - \text{ta} - \text{din} - - - 
\end{align*}
\]

which he plays with minor variations through cycle 40. In cycle 41 (6:21), he introduces for the first time a pattern that articulates all six pulses of each beat:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{lta} & - \text{din} - \text{din} - \\
\text{ta} & - \text{din} - \text{din} - \\
\text{lta} & - \text{din} - \text{din} - \\
\text{ta} & - \text{din} - t r g \dd \\
\end{align*}
\]

this is finished with a cadential figure (though not really a mōrā) ending on the eduppu, cycle 42 (6:31):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{l\text{din}} & - - - t r g \dd \\
\text{l\text{din}} & - - - \text{ta} - \text{l} t r g \dd t k t r k t t k \\
\text{l\text{din}} & - - - t r g \dd \\
\text{l\text{din}} & - - - \text{ta} - \text{l} t r g \dd t k t r k t t k \\
\text{l\text{din}} & - - - \text{ta} - \text{l} t r g \dd t k t r k t t k [\text{din}] \\
\end{align*}
\]

Cycle 42 is a transition from the figure

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{l\text{din}} & - - - \text{din} - \text{lta} - \text{din} - - - \\
\end{align*}
\]

to
ldin - gu ta ki ta ldin - gu ta ki ta

which continues with minor elaborations until cycle 45, when he begins the fully elaborated double-time pattern

\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{din - jo } \eta \nu \text{ ta } \eta \eta \text{ jo } \eta \nu \\
O \quad O \quad n \quad N \quad n \quad O \quad n \quad N \quad n \quad O \quad n \\
G \quad G \quad G \quad G \quad G \quad G \\
\end{array}
\]

caturaśra motif

Beginning with beat 3 of cycle 46, he reduces this twelve-pulse phrase to its eight-pulse counterpart: (7:17)

\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{din - jo } \eta \nu \text{ ta } \eta \eta \text{ jo } \eta \nu \\
\end{array}
\]

which he plays in groups of three through the end of cycle 46

\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{ldin - jo } \eta \nu \text{ ta } \eta \eta \text{ ljo } \eta \nu \\
\text{din - jo } \eta \nu \text{ lta } \eta \eta \text{ jo } \eta \nu \\
\text{din - ljo } \eta \nu \text{ ta } \eta \eta \text{ jo } \eta \nu \\
\end{array}
\]

In cycle 47 he plays the following phrase (7:25)
While he repeats this figure only briefly, and does not elaborate it into a körvai, in combination with the preceding eight-pulse figure, the listener is reminded very strongly of a well-known körvai of Palani Subramania Pillai.\textsuperscript{12}

The double-time figure represented above,

\begin{verbatim}
din - jo ŋu ta ŋa jo ŋu ta ŋa jo ŋu
\end{verbatim}

is used to finish the first half of cycle 49, and is followed by the preparation for the final tiśra gati körvai.

\textbf{Körvai 4, cycles 50-53}

\textit{preparation}

The preparation for körvai 4 is once again in the spirit of ‘kalpana solkaṭṭu’ described above (7:36). The following phrases, which herald the körvai, are in a kind of reductive form, but do not represent any orderly

\textsuperscript{12}The full körvai including its derivation from a caturaśra motif, may be found in Sankaran, cycles 103-106.
gopucca principle; they seem to introduce the composition without using any of its specific materials.

ltan - gu din - gu lta - ka ta ki ṭa
lta ki ṭa jo ṭu ta lta - ki - ṭa -
lta ka di na ta - lki - ṭa -
ta ka ldi na ta - ta -
ta ka di na
ta - lta - ki - ṭa -

structure

Körvaí 4 is quite simple in design. It is made up of two sections, each of which comprises a triple statement of a jāti-specific figure.

ta - - - ta ka din - din - na - ta - - - - - {18}
ta - - - ta ka din - din - na - ta - - - - - {18}
ta - - - ta ka din - din - na - ta - - - - - {18}
mōrā
ta - ka - di - ku - ta di - ki ṭa tom (x=14) [y=0]
ta - ka - di - ku - ta di - ki ṭa tom (x=14) [y=0]
ta - ka - di - ku - ta di - ki ṭa tom (x=14)

As was the case with körvaí 1, it is difficult to resist the temptation to rework these materials into a more formally interesting composition. The most inviting possibility arises because of the unfulfilled cadential promise of the introductory section. The presence of ‘ta - - - -’ at the end of the first two statements of the line stimulates expectations that this section will take the mōrā form, as follows:
If the composition took this form, it could be analyzed as two interlocking mōrās; the only remaining problem would be the manner of distribution of the six pulses that made up ‘ta - - - - - -’ at the end of the third line. This can be accomplished in many ways, according to one’s priorities. For example, if it were important to keep the first section four-and-a-half beats (54 pulses) long, the six pulses could be divided evenly between the two ‘y’ figures, so that [y=9], or they could be divided among the ‘x’ figures, so that (x=14). Many other possibilities exist, but Ramabhadrānam has chosen to leave the kōrvai in a very simple and direct form.

**treatment**

It is repeated identically three times (7:42, 7:50, 7:59), beginning at the eduppu, cycle 50, and ending in cycle 53. All three repetitions are in tiṣra gati. Ramabhadrānam ends the madhyama kāla section of the solo by playing the following tiṣra gati arudi in cycle 53, beginning on beat 3, and ending on beat 5.
ta ka jo ṇu (x=4)  
tam - - - - [y=6]  
ta ka jo ṇu (x=4)  
tam - - - - [y=6]  
ta ka jo ṇu (x=4) [tam]

The use of this arudi suggests that a main structural point is being indicated. In fact, he is about to end his solo.

Ending section: cycles 53-69

The patterns in this section begin spare, as usual (8:19)

din - ta din - ta jo ṇu
di na ta din - ta jo ṇu

then fill out to a reprise of

ta ṇa ta di ta ṇa ta di

and finally fill out completely to

tan k t t k tom k t t k jo ṇu
In cycle 60, Ramabhadran once again changes patterns at beat 4 when he might have been expected to change one beat later at a more important point in the tāla. This seems to be idiosyncratic, at least among the players in this study.

Beginning in cycle 60 (9:19), plays the following figure, first in caturaśra gati, (twice in two beats) and then in tiśra gati (three times in two beats):

\[ \text{tam - t r k ā t a t o m t r k ā t} \]

Following this figure, he begins a series of patterns that are recognizable to almost all listeners as heralding the end of the solo (9:32). They include:

\[ \text{tam - - di ta ka jo ū nu} \]
\[ \text{tam tam tam di ta ka jo ū nu (cycles 62-65)} \]

\[ \text{din - - ta ki ta} \]
\[ \text{din - - ta ta k ā t t k t r k ā t t k (65-66)} \]

\[ \text{tam k ā t t k t r k ā t t k} \]
\[ \text{tom k ā t t k t r k ā t t k} \]
\[ \text{t k t r k ā t t k} \]

These patterns are all characterized by louder, harder playing, including much more use of the closed left hand stroke ‘ta’ and right hand strokes on the black spot. The patterns themselves are much denser than anything played previously.
Long Mōrā and Final Kōrvai: (cycles 70-77)

Ramabhadran uses the paradigm long mōrā (10:49), which is notated below:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ldi} & \ - \ \text{tan k t lt k t r k t t k} \\
\text{lt k di} & \ - \ \text{tan k t lt k t r k t t k} \\
\text{ldi} & \ - \ \text{tan k t lt k t r k t t k} \\
\text{lta t lān g tom} & \ - \ \text{lta t lān g tom} \\
\text{ldi} & \ - \ \text{tan k t lt k t r k t t k} \\
\text{lt k di} & \ - \ \text{tan k t lt k t r k t t k} \\
\text{ldi} & \ - \ \text{tan k t lt k t r k t t k} \\
\text{lta t lān g tom} & \ - \ \text{lta t lān g tom} \\
\text{ldi} & \ - \ \text{tan k t lt k t r k t t k} \\
\text{lt k di} & \ - \ \text{tan k t lt k t r k t t k} \\
\text{lta t lān g tom} & \ - \ \text{lta t lān g tom} \\
\text{ldi} & \ - \ \text{tan k t lt k t r k t t k} \\
\text{lta t lān g tom} & \ - \ \text{lta t lān g tom} \\
\text{mōrā} & \\
\text{lta t lān g tom} & \ - \ \text{lta t lān g tom} \\
\text{lt a t lān g tom} & \ - \ \text{ta t lān g tom} \\
\text{lta t lān g tom} & \ - \ \text{lta t lān g tom}
\end{align*}
\]

This is a classic example not only of the long mōrā form, but of one of its most common literal expressions. It is identical, with the possible exception of
some details of fingering, to Murthy's, and bears a striking resemblance to the
version recorded in Brown\textsuperscript{13} 25 years ago:

\begin{verbatim}
di - tan g \dd di k t k t r g \dd
di di tan g \dd di k t k t r g \dd
di - tan g \dd di k t k t r g \dd
tom - ta - tam - - -

di - tan g \dd di k t k t r g \dd
di di tan g \dd di k t k t r g \dd
di - tan g \dd di k t k t r g \dd
tom - ta - tam - - -

di - tan g \dd di k t k t r g \dd
di di tan g \dd di k t k t r g \dd
di - tan g \dd di k t k t r g \dd
tom ta tam -

di di tan g \dd di k t k t r g \dd
tom ta tam -

di - tan g \dd di k t k t r g \dd
mōrā
d k t k t r g \dd
tan g \dd
d k t k t r g \dd
tan g \dd
d k t k t r g \dd
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{13}Vol.2, lesson 91, pp.189-191
Final Körvai (11:02)

Ramabhadran finishes his solo with the following final körvai:

**Section A**

lta - - - l- -
di - l- - - -
ilki - - - l- -
ṭa - l- - - -
ltom - - - l- - (30)

ṭa - l- -
di - l- -
ki - l- -
ṭa - l- -
tom - l- - (20)

**Section B**

ta - l- - di - - ilki - - ṭa ll- - toml - l- - (15)

ta - di l- - ki - ṭa l- - toml - (10)

mōra

ta ldi ki ṭa toml
tlta di ki ṭa ltom
ta di ki lṭa toml (x=15)
	tam tam lṭam - [y=4]
ta di ilki ṭa toml
ta ldi ki ṭa toml
ltada ki ṭa ltom (x=15)
	tam tam tam l- [y=4]
ta di ki lṭa toml
ta di ilki ṭa toml
ta lldi ki ṭa toml (x=15) [tam]
structure

This körvai appears to be in the ‘ta din gi ṇa tom’ form; while its phrases certainly suggest this analysis, the reduction preceding the mōrā is in two stages, the second of which acts as a bridge to the mōrā. The first part, labeled Section A above, is made up of the reduction from thirty to twenty pulses.

The second part, Section B, may at first hearing seem to be of a piece with Section A. In order for this to be the case, it would have to be ten pulses in duration; in Section A, the duration of each syllable decreased from six to four pulses. The next logical reduction would have been to two pulses per syllable, which would have resulted in the third line comprising ten pulses. In fact it is fifteen, and is the beginning of a ‘bridge’ section, the final stage of which is also the first line of the mōrā.14 Section B (25 pulses, 15+10) may be seen as a double-time version of Section A (50 pulses, 30+20).

It is usual, though not necessary, for the final körvai to be calculated in an eḍuppu-to-eḍuppu relationship with the tālā in which it is to be played. In other words, it will most often take a certain number of full cycles to execute. In the present example, the two stages of the reduction have taken seventy-five pulses so far (30+20+15+10); thus there are now two demands on the mōrā. First, it must be made of the syllables ‘ta di ki ṭa tom’, and second, it must add to 75 in such a way as to come out to 64, 128, or 192 pulses (one, two, or three cycles

14See also Raghu's final körvai.
at 64 pulses per cycle). Naturally, it must also maintain the form ‘x y x y x’.

Ramabhadran’s solution is as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
ta &\,\, di\,\, ki\,\, \text{ta} \,\, tom \\
ta &\,\, di\,\, ki\,\, \text{ta} \,\, tom \\
ta &\,\, di\,\, ki\,\, \text{ta} \,\, tom \quad (x=15) \\
&\quad \text{tam tam tam - } [y=4] \\
ta &\,\, di\,\, ki\,\, \text{ta} \,\, tom \\
ta &\,\, di\,\, ki\,\, \text{ta} \,\, tom \\
ta &\,\, di\,\, ki\,\, \text{ta} \,\, tom \quad (x=15) \\
&\quad \text{tam tam tam - } [y=4] \\
ta &\,\, di\,\, ki\,\, \text{ta} \,\, tom \\
ta &\,\, di\,\, ki\,\, \text{ta} \,\, tom \\
ta &\,\, di\,\, ki\,\, \text{ta} \,\, tom \quad (x=15)
\end{align*}
\]

giving a total of 53 pulses \((15+4+15+4+15)\). Added to the preceding seventy-five, the entire körvai comprises 128, or two full cycles of the tāla.

As always, the final körvai is played three times, at the end of which the other musicians rejoin and finish the kṛti.
**Murthy Analysis**

- TOTAL CYCLES: 73
- TOTAL TIME: 11'40"
- AVERAGE BPM: 50
- FIRST MINUTE: 47
- LAST MINUTE: 56

---

**Vilamba Kāla: cycles 1-8**

Cycles 1-3 are based on the archetype

\[ ta - din - din - na - \\
   ta ka din - din - na - \]

There are two ending suffixes; the first,

\[ ta tom t lān g t k t k t lān g \]

ends cycle 2; the second,

\[ ta di t r [k t t k tom k t t om ] \]

ends cycle 3 (00:25), re-enters at the end of beat 6, cycle 6 (00:53), and eventually serves as the ‘x’ figure in the mōrā completing the kōrvai that begins
in cycle 7. Murthy describes the bracketed section of this figure as a kanjīra fingering. It is most likely derived from the mṛdaṅgam pattern

\[ ki \; ta \; ta \; ka \; ta \; ri \; ki \; \text{ta} \; \text{tom} \]

which in turn is a double-time variation of 'ta di ki \text{ta} \; \text{tom}'.

The kanjīra is played with only one hand; in order to play material composed for the mṛdaṅgam, fingerings must be devised that do not depend on two-hand alternation. In some cases, particularly appealing patterns arise from such necessity, and this is such a case. He has retranslated it into a double-handed version for the mṛdaṅgam as follows:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{ta} \; \text{di} \; \text{t} \; \text{r} \; [\text{k} \; \text{t} \; \text{t} \; \text{k} \; \text{tom} \; \text{k} \; \text{t} \; \text{tom}] \\
1 \; 3 \; N \; [3 \; 1 \; 3 \; 0 \; 3 \; 0] \\
X \; [\; X \; 0 \; X \; 0]
\end{array}
\]

Cycles 4 through 6 are based on an alternation of

\[ \text{ta} \; - \; \text{din} \; - \; \text{din} \; - \; \text{na} \; - \]

with the Palani Subramania Pillai phrase

\[
\text{l\text{tam} - - d} \; \text{ta} \; \text{ka} \; \text{din} \; - \; \text{ldin} \; - \; \text{din} \; - \; \text{lna} \; - \; \text{k} \; \text{t} \; \text{t} \; \text{k} \\
\text{l} \; \text{tom} \; \text{ta} \; \text{ka} \; \text{tom} \; \text{l} \; \text{ta} \; \text{ka} \; \text{din} \; - \; \text{l\text{tam} - tam - ldin - - -}
\]

\(^1\text{vol. 2, p. 168}\)
He does not develop it as do Ramabhadrana or Sankaran, but rather states it simply in cycle 4. He re-states it in cycle 6, (beat 7) as a very brief introduction to körvai 1.

Körvai 1 (00:57)

preparation

Other than the statements of the kanjīra-derived figure discussed above, there is no preparation for körvai 1. It will be seen throughout this solo that, at least on this occasion, Murthy preferred to start his körvais without warning.

structure

This composition is made up of two interlocking parts. The first is a three stage reduction:

\[
\begin{align*}
ta & - - \text{ di } - - \text{ ta ka di } \text{ na } - \text{ ta } - - - & \{15\} \\
\text{di } & - - \text{ ta ka di } \text{ na } - \text{ ta } - - - & \{12\} \\
\text{ta ka di } & \text{ na } - \text{ ta } - - - & \{9\}
\end{align*}
\]

\[2^{\text{cycles 4 ff.}}\]

\[3^{\text{cycles 21-27}}\]
Each of these lines is completed by the kanjïra-derived suffix discussed previously:

\[
\text{ta k ŋ t k tom k ŋ tom} - - \{8\}
\]

The interlock takes place at the end of the third line above, where the suffix changes function; it now functions as the ‘x’ figure in the môrâ.

The môrâ itself is in a compound form. Each repetition of the larger ‘x’

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{(ta k ŋ t k tom k ŋ tom)} \quad [- \ -] \\
&\text{(ta k ŋ t k tom k ŋ tom)} \quad [- \ -] \\
&\text{(ta k ŋ t k tom k ŋ tom)}
\end{align*}
\]

is itself in the ‘x y x y x’ form, where (x=6), and [y=2]. In this case, the ‘y’ is not articulated at all, but exists only as a rest of two pulses duration after ‘tom’. The overall form of the môrâ may be represented as follows:

\[
(x y x y x) [y] (x y x y x) [y] (x y x y x)
\]

If each small môrâ is taken as the ‘x’ statement in the larger môrâ. Overall, (x=22), [y=5], giving a total of 76 pulses for the large môrâ. The first section could be described as having the môrâ form, with the following values:
but the cadential effect is quite weak. The section does not seem to stand on its own, although it is orderly in form. The source of its cadential weakness lies in the density pattern of each line. Syllables are clustered in the middle of a line,

\text{ta} - \text{di} - \text{[ta ka di na]} - \text{ta} - -

or at the beginning,

\text{[ta k ū t k tom k ū]} \text{tom} - -

and each of the five lines ends with a kārvai, or space, of three or four pulses. This distribution pattern draws attention away from the ends of lines. The momentum in the section naturally gathers in the phrase

\text{ta k ū t k tom k ū tom} - -

which carries the full cadential force of the kārvai through its nine-fold repetition as the mōrā. The full composition may be notated as follows:⁴

⁴This is kārvai example 3, p.72, above.
ltə - di l - ta ka ldi na - ta l - - ta lk t t k tom k t ltom - -
di l - ta ka ldi na - ta l - -
ta lk t t k tom k t ltom - -
ta lka di na - lta - -
mörä lta k t t k tom lk t t lom - -
llta k t t k tom lk t t lom - -
lta k t t k tom lk t t lom (x=22)
   ta - l - - [y=5]
ta lk t t k tom k t ltom - -
ta lk t t k tom k t ltom - -
ta lk t t k tom k t lom (x=22)
   ta - l - - [y=5]
ta k t lt k tom k t t lom l - -
ta k t lt k tom k t t lom l - -
ta k t lt k tom k t t lom (x=22) [ta]

The körvai begins on the eñuppū of cycle 7 (00:57); Murthy plays the composition only once—the single statement takes two full cycles of the tālā.

As asked about playing it once, he said,

It comes sama to sama. You can play it once or three times, but you mustn’t play it twice.\(^5\)

\(^5\)vol.2, p.170. There are exceptions. See Mani, körvai1 and Raghu, körvai 3
Madhyama Kāla; cycles 9-62

In cycle 9 and the first half of cycle 10 (1:17), the sarvalaghū pattern is again derived from

ta - din - din - na -

but with a shift in emphasis to the softer, modulated left hand use known as gumiki. In this particular instance, the notation below shows that the right hand is used only on the second and fourth syllable of each phrase, while the left hand is used in all four. On the syllables in the beat where the left hand is alone, the gumiki stroke is employed; that is, the upward, sliding sound is produced. When the hands are together, the left hand is kept in the same striking position, but the slide does not take place. Slide strokes are indicated in italics.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
\text{din} & \text{din} & \text{din} & \text{na} & \text{din} & \text{din} & \text{na} & \\
O & N & O & N & G & G & G & G
\end{array}
\]
One effect of this treatment of the material is an apparent accent on the second and fourth notes of the phrase, so that they fall directly between the hand gestures marking the tāla.⁶

From the middle of cycle 10 until the beginning of the kōrvai in cycle 14, the sarvalaghu pattern becomes fully expressed as madhyama kāla. That is to say that any of the eight pulses in each beat may be accented. The main sarvalaghu here is

\[ \text{din - ta jo ŋu ta jo ŋu} \]

Until the middle of cycle 11, this is played only with the right hand. When the left hand is brought in, it is no longer in the gumiki mode, but playing full, open ‘tom’.

At the beginning of cycle 12 (1:46) he introduces the prefix

\[ \text{tktktăng} \]

\[ \text{N N N n} \]

\[ \text{o o o o} \]

---

⁶Sometimes this accent is exploited, as in the opening of Raghu’s solo, by playing the left hand strokes so softly that they are barely audible, while increasing the strength of the right hand strokes. When this is done at great speed, tāla-keeping requires more than the usual alertness.
to the sarvalaghu phrase. He repeats it at the beginning of beat 5, again at beat 7, and finishes the cycle in the following manner:

\[
t\ k\ t\ \text{lân}\ g\ t\ k\ t\ \text{lân}\ g\ t\ \text{lân}\ g\ ^7
\]

Kőrvai 2; cycles 14-17 (2:06)

Preparation

As in the case of his first kőrvai, Murthy begins this one abruptly, with no preparatory phrases. The abruptness is heightened by the fact that the kőrvai begins in tiśra gati, when all the preceding material has been in caturaśra gati. This is a good example of the range of aesthetic choices open to mṛdaṅgam artists. As was pointed out previously, Murthy seems to have favored abrupt, surprising beginnings, at least on this occasion.

Structure

The kőrvai seems to be as follows:

---

^7This bears a striking resemblance to Ramabhadrān's use of a similar phrase in the first beat of cycle 33.
tišram
lt - ka - din - lta - ta - - - l -
ta -
ta - lka - din - ta - lta - - -
lt -
ta - ka - ldin - ta - ta - l - - -

lt - l - - - - -
l di - - - - - l - -
kt - - l - - - -
ta - l - - - - -
ltom - - - - - l - -
ta - - - ll - - - -
di - l - - - - -
lkt - - - - - l - -
ta - - - l - - - -
tom - l - - - - -

lt - - - - - l - -
di - - - l - - - -
kt - l - - - - -
lta - - - - l - -
tom - - - l - - - -
caturaśram
ta l- - -
di l- - -
ki l- - -
ṭa ll- - -
tom l- - -
ta l- - -
di l- - -
ki l- - -
ṭa l- - -
tom l- - -
ta l- - -
di l- - -
ki l- - -
ṭa l- - -
tom l- - -
tiśram
ta - l- -
di - - -
lki - - -
ṭa - l- -
tom - - -
lṭa - - -
di - ll- -
ki - - -
lṭa - - -
tom - l- -
ta - - -
lđi - - -
ki - l- -
ṭa - - -
ltom - - -
caturaśram
ta l- di - ki l- ṭa - tom l-
ta - ldi - ki - ṭa l- tom -
ta l- di - ki l- ṭa - tom l-
mōrā
t k d k t r lk ṭ tom
t k d k lt r k ṭ tom
t k lld k t r k ṭ tom

Murthy attributes this kōrvai to the late kanjīra master Pudukottai Mamundiya Pillai, though he himself got it from Palghat Mani Iyer. The kōrvai has an introductory section that seems to be 46 pulses in duration:

lta - ka - din - lta - ta - - - l- - ta -
ta - lka - din - ta - lta - - - - lta -
ta - ka - ldin - ta - ta - l- - - - [46]

followed by five sets of the cadential figure

ta di ki ṭa tom
 ta di ki ṭa tom
 ta di ki ṭa tom

The first set follows the introductory section and is in tiṣra gati, with each syllable of the set expanded to eight pulses in duration, for a total of 120 pulses. It is interesting to note that while 120 pulses will fit comfortably within 20 beats in tiṣra gati, the introductory section is 46 pulses long; thus the first cadential set begins not on a beat, but two pulses before the beat. The significance of this
two-pulse shift will be revealed in the analysis of the second set. The first set, then, is as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta} & - \mid - - - - - \\
\text{ldi} & - - - - \mid - - \\
\text{ki} & - - \mid - - - - \\
\text{ta} & - \mid - - - - - \\
\text{ltom} & - - - - \mid - - \\
\text{ta} & - - - \mid - - - - - \\
\text{di} & - \mid - - - - - - \\
\text{ldki} & - - - - \mid - - \\
\text{ta} & - - \mid - - - - - \\
\text{tom} & - \mid - - - - - - \\
\text{lda} & - - - - \mid - - \\
\text{di} & - - - \mid - - - - \\
\text{ki} & - \mid - - - - - - \\
\text{ltav} & - - - - \mid - - \\
\text{tom} & - - \mid - - - - - \\
\end{align*}
\]

The second set raises some interesting issues. Murthy says it is in caturaśra gatī; however, it begins after four pulses in a beat that is considered to be in tiśra gatī, that is, twelve pulses per beat. Therefore, if he is in fact playing in tiśraṃ until the very instant he begins the second set, he must begin the second set one-third of the way through the beat.

The problem is that he could change gatīs after one-quarter of a beat, but not after one-third of a beat; somehow, he has to make the second set feel to the tāla-keeper as if it is subdivided in four. As it stands, he is beginning with a triple
feeling, and the dutiful tāla-keeper would quite likely adjust the placement of his hand gestures to preserve that feeling.

A possible solution is that he changes subdivision psychologically in the last half-beat of the first set (2:22). Thus, rather than the last beat in the first set ending with

```
- - tom - - - - - - (ta -
```

where each pulse after the heavy line represents one-sixth of a beat, he would change the subdivision beginning with the beat, and not with any sounded syllable;

```
- - tom - - - - - - (ta
```

so that the section after the heavy line now represents three pulses, each of which is one-eighth of a beat. This solves the problem of turning two sixthss of a beat into one quarter of a beat, but it creates a new problem. The first set is now no longer entirely in tiśra gati, and, what is more troublesome, is no longer 120 pulses, since the last syllable in the set now ends not after two-sixths of a beat, but after two-eighths a beat. One pulse has been lost.
At this point it is important to remember that the part of a beat under discussion is happening in silence. When does he make the subdivision change? One suspects very strongly that he is making it as suggested above, beginning with the mātra just before the set begins. With this in mind, each of the next sets will be represented as beginning with the mātra immediately preceding their first articulations, and not with the articulations themselves.

second set

caturaśram

[1- - - ]ta 1- - -
di 1- - -
ki 1- - -
ṭa ll- - -
tom 1- - -

ta 1- - -
di 1- - -
ki 1- - -
ṭa 1- - -
tom 1- - -

ta 1- - -
di 1- - -
ki 1- - -
ṭa 1- - -
tom 1

The third set will require the same solution as the second. The subdivision will be assumed to have changed at the beginning of the half-beat in which the set begins:
third set
tiśram
[l- - - - ]
ta - l- -
di - - -
lki - - -
ta - l- -
tom - - -

lta - - -
di - ll- -
ki - - -
lta - - -
tom - l- -


ta - - -
l di - - -
ki - l- -
ta - - -
[ltom - - - ]

The final syllable above is in brackets because it will function in the same way as the bracketed beat sections above. The subdivision will be assumed to change to four beginning with this syllable (2:36); rather than four-sixths of a beat, it will now represent three-fourths of a beat as follows:

fourth set
caturaśram
[ltom - - ]
ta l- di - ki l- ta - tom l-
ta - ldi - ki - ta l- tom -
ta l- di - ki l- ta - tom l-
The transition from the fourth set to the fifth and final set is mercifully straightforward and requires no adjustment.

mōrā
  t k d k t r lk t tom
  t k d k lt r k t tom
  t k llt t k t r k t tom

This kōrvai is unique in this study, in that its arithmetical cogency must be understood by figuring out what happens in parts of beats that have no articulations in them.

The solution that seems to leave everything intact is unusual. It has already been established that the beat in which the sets change must already have the properties of the subsequent set before that set begins; in the change from set one to set two, for example, he can start one-quarter after the beat or two-sixths after the beat, but not both at once.

It turns out that the listener has been tricked by the natural assumption that these changes of subdivision and/or section coincide with sounded events, when in fact they coincide with unsounded events. Murthy is making section changes in his mind before anything becomes audible. If we look at the structure of the kōrvai from this point of view, the arithmetic sorts out nicely:
introductory section; 42 pulses

tišram

lta - ka - din - lta - ta - - l- -
ta -
ta - lka - din - ta - lta - - - -
lta -
ta - ka - ldin - ta - ta -

set one; 120 pulses

l- - - - ta -
l- - - -
l- di -

l- -
l- - - -
l- - ki - -
l- - - - ta -
l- - - -
ltom - - - -

l- - ta - - -
l- - - di -
l- - - -
l- - - -
l- - - -
l- - - -
l- - - -
l- - - -
l- - - -
l- - tom - - -
set two; 60 pulses
caturaśram
l- - - ta
l- - - di
l- - - ki
l- - - ūta
l- - - tom
l- - - ta
l- - - di
l- - - ki
l- - - ūta
l- - - tom
l- - - ta
l- - - di
l- - - ki
l- - - ūta
l- - - tom

set three; 60 pulses
tiśram
l- - - ta -
l- - di - - -
lki - - ūta -
l- - tom - - -
lta - - di -
l- - ki - - -
lţa - - - tom
l- - - ta - - -
ldi - - - ki -
l- - ūta - - -
set four; 32 pulses

caturaśram

lom - ta
l- di - ki
l- ta - tom
l- ta - di
l- ki - ūta

l- tomm- ta
l- di - ki
l- ūta - tom

set five; 16 pulses

mūrā

l- t k d k t r lk ūtom
   t k d k t r k ūtom
   t k ld k t r k ūtom

With this organization an arithmetical analysis is possible;
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>section</th>
<th>pulses</th>
<th>gati</th>
<th>no. mātras</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>intro</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>tiśra</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>set one</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>tiśra</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>set two</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>caturaśra</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>set three</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>tiśra</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>set four</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>caturaśra</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>set five</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>caturaśra</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analyzed in this manner, the total number of mātras is sixty-four; at the present rate of counting, the kūrvai takes 32 beats, or four full cycles of the tāla. It is played only once.

Perhaps the most unusual feature of this kūrvai lies in its treatment of kārvai, which is very roughly analogous to the Euro-American 'rest'. Kārvai, unlike our rest, *includes* the syllable immediately preceding it, and in fact may be said to flow from it as an extension. Thus
is not conceived as one note followed by seven rests, but as 'ta', eight kārvai. The concept is one not of addition, but of expansion from one syllable to as long a duration as is necessary. The pulses following the initial articulation are in some sense the property of that articulation.

In this case, however, the silent pulses are transformed by the necessity of preparing the subdivisional field for a subsequent articulation; their meanings are changed as they cross the border demarcated by the mātra immediately preceding the first articulation of the next set. The final syllable of the first set, which seems to be eight pulses long, (as have been the previous fourteen syllables)

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{--- tom ---} \\
\end{array}
\]  

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{--- (ta ---)} \\
\end{array}
\]

in actual function is seven pulses long, with the first four representing the final four-sixths of one beat, and the final three representing three-quarters of the next beat.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{--- tom ---} \\
\end{array}
\]  

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{--- (ta ---)} \\
\end{array}
\]
Analogous changes take place at the ends of the second and third sets; there is no need for them between the introductory section and the first set, or between the fourth set and the fifth, since there is no change of subdivision in these places.

Ordinarily it is possible to represent a composition in its component phrases without reference to a particular tāḷa structure, as if it were a kind of concrete poetry. This is true even though the composition will almost certainly have been conceived in a tāḷa; it can be recited, or even written down as if it existed independently. The present kōrval makes use of illusion. The final 'tom' in each of the first three sets seems to be of the same duration as the preceding fourteen syllables. In fact it is not. There is really no way to imagine this kōrval apart from the necessities generated by the beat structure of the tāḷa.

The use of illusion as an aesthetic device is not peculiar to Murthy, who will be seen to favor surprise and concealment throughout this particular solo, but this type of illusion is unique to this kōrval, at least in the present study. One is left to wonder what other devices the players of older generations used to amaze their friends and confound their enemies. Given the atmosphere of artistic combat with which the musicians' anecdotes abound, they must have been dangerous indeed.
sarvalaghu; cycles 18-23

One notes with interest the absence of the arudi in this solo. However there is a style of transition from one section to the next. As if to soften the effect of his manner of beginning the previous kōr vai, he reprises the gumiki patterns of cycles 9 and 10 before beginning the full madhyama kāla sarvalaghu (2:48)

\[ \text{ldin - ta na lta ta jo } \nu \text{ lta na ta jo } \nu \text{ tam k } t \ t \ k \]

This is played in cycles 19 and 20; in both cases, the right hand is emphasized in the first half of the cycle, the left hand brought in, usually with gumiki, for the second half.

In beat 7, cycle 20 (3:07), Murthy introduces a double-speed relative of

\[ \text{tam - di ta ka din - din - din - na - k } t \ t \ k \]

in this case, the pattern is

\[ \text{tam - d t k din din din na - - - k } t \ t \ k \ t \ r \ k \ t \ t \ k \]

Cycle 22 and the first half of cycle 23 center on the sarvalaghu pattern

\[ \text{ta na ta di} \]
The second half of cycle 23 does not organize neatly into public domain sarvalaghu patterns; the sounds used are also different from those which have come before, in that harder, louder strokes are used. It is possible that he is making a deliberate transition from the softer sounds that have preceded to the spare, percussive sounds used in the körvai to follow. It is also possible that he is thinking of something related to the körvai and letting his hands take over while his conscious mind works out some details.

Körvai 3; cycles 24-26 (3:40)

preparation

Once again, Murthy begins his composition with no warning.

structure

The körvai is in the ‘ta  din  gi ṇa tom’ form; in other words it is made up only of these five syllables, and represents some orderly reduction of kārvai. In this case the reduction comprises six stages and is followed by a mōrā that represents a further reduction. It may be written as follows:
Stage 1; each syllable = 7 pulses (total-35)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{lta} & \quad - - - \quad | - - \\
\text{di} & \quad | - - - \quad | - \\
\text{ki} & \quad | - - - \quad | - \\
\text{t\-a} & \quad - - \quad | - - \\
\text{t\-om} & \quad - - - \quad | - - \\
\end{align*}
\]

Stage 2; each syllable = 6 pulses (total-30)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{t\-a} & \quad | - - - \quad | - \\
\text{di} & \quad | - - - \\
\text{ki} & \quad | - - - \quad | - \\
\text{t\-a} & \quad - - \quad | - - \\
\text{t\-om} & \quad | - - - \quad | - - \\
\end{align*}
\]

Stage 3; each syllable = 5 pulses (total-25)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{t\-a} & \quad - - - \quad | - \\
\text{di} & \quad | - - - \\
\text{ki} & \quad | - - - \\
\text{l\-t\-a} & \quad - - - \quad | - \\
\text{t\-om} & \quad - - - \quad | - \\
\end{align*}
\]

Stage 4; each syllable = 4 pulses (total-20)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{t\-a} & \quad | - - - \\
\text{di} & \quad | - - - \\
\text{ki} & \quad | - - - \\
\text{t\-a} & \quad | - - - \\
\text{t\-om} & \quad | - - - \\
\end{align*}
\]

Stage 5; each syllable = 3 pulses (total-15)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{t\-a} & \quad | - - - \quad | - - - \quad | t\-a \quad | - - - \quad | \text{t\-om} \quad | - - \\
\end{align*}
\]

Stage 6; each syllable = 2 pulses (total-10)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{t\-a} & \quad | d\-i \quad | - - - \quad | k\-i \quad | - - - \quad | t\-a \quad | - - - \quad | \text{t\-om} \quad | - - \\
\end{align*}
\]
mōrā (total-61)
ta ldi ki ūa tom l-
ta di ki lta tom -
ta ldi ki ūa tom (x=17)  
ltam - ta ka [y=4]
lta di ki ūa ltom -  
ta di lki ūa tom -
lta di ki ūa ltom (x=17)  
tam - ta lka di ku [y=6]
ta ldi ki ūa tom l-
ta di ki lta tom -  
ta lldi ki ūa tom (x=17)

The total number of pulses is 196. Murthy derived this kōrvai from another one that takes three even cycles of the tāla (192 pulses). In order to generate a kōrvai that would begin on the sama of one cycle and end on the eduppu three cycles later he has deliberately altered the original mōrā.⁸ The original mōrā follows:
mōrā (total-57)
  ta di ki ṭa tom -
  ta di ki ṭa tom -
  ta di ki ṭa tom (x=17)
      tam - - [y=3]
  ta di ki ṭa tom -
  ta di ki ṭa tom -
  ta di ki ṭa tom (x=17)
      tam - - [y=3]
  ta di ki ṭa tom -
  ta di ki ṭa tom -
  ta di ki ṭa tom (x=17)

The alteration is assumed, possibly arbitrarily, to expand the 'y' figures by one and three pulses respectively. It is certainly possible to attribute the expansion to the 'x' figures; any ambiguity in this case is entirely permissible.

treatment

Kōrvaį 3 begins on the sama of cycle 24, and ends on the eḍuppu of cycle 27. It is played only once. By altering the kōrvaį so that it goes sama-eḍuppu, Murthy has 'frozen' it so that it can be played just once.
sarvalaghulu; cycle 27 (4:09)

The sarvalaghulu in cycle 27 serves to generate momentum for the transition to follow.

Körvai 4; transition to tiśra gati; cycle 28-32 (4:31)

preparation

Surprise seems to be a dominant element of this solo, although in this case Murthy is foiled in his attempt to spring tiśra gati on an unsuspecting audience. The körvai, once again in the ‘ta din gi ṇa tom’ form, is designed to conceal the internal subdivision change until the mōrā. An error on the part of the tāla-keeper in cycle 28 (4:25) forces him to reveal prematurely that he has already changed his internal counting. As in körvai 2 above, the sparseness of the articulated material is used as camouflage.

structure

The körvai has three reductive stages before the mōrā, which represents a further reduction.
Stage One; each syllable =12 pulses (total 60)
lt – - - - - l- - - - -
ldi – - - - - l- - - - -
lki – - - - - l- - - - -
lta – - - - - l- - - - -
ltom – - - - - l- - - - -

Stage Two; each syllable = 6 pulses (total 30)
lt – - - - -
ldi – - - - -
lki – - - - -
lta – - - - -
ltom – - - - -

Stage Three; each syllable =3 pulses (total 15)
lt – -
di – -
lki – -
ta – -
ltom – -

mərə (total 17)
ta di ki lta tom (x=5) - [y=1]
ta di ki lta tom (x=5) - [y=1]
ta di ki lta tom (x=5)

From the distribution of beat markings, it is clear that there would be no way to discern the change to tiṣram until the mərə. This was discussed in our second interview:

DN: Up to this point you’ve been playing in caturaśra gati, and the way the syllables are, (that is, right on the beats with silence in between) you are making the change to tiṣra gati inside, right?
TKM: (points at chest) Right. I’m keeping it inside.

DN: Nobody else can hear that.

TKM: Right, they can’t hear it.

DN: Only when the mōrā comes...

TKM: Only then will they know.⁹

---

**treatment**

By contrast with kōrvai 3, in which material was added that necessitated performing the composition only once, kōrvai 4 contains material that requires that it be done three times (4:31, 4:43, 4:55). Once again, the extra material can be found in the ‘y’ figures of the mōrā. In this case, removal of the ‘y’ figures would yield a pulse total of 120, or ten full beats. Instead, the total is 122, which is not divisible by 12 or 6; this results in each repetition of the kōrvai taking ten and one-sixth beats. Only the first repetition begins coincidentally with a mātra. The second and third begin two-sixths and four-sixths after their respective mātras, and the third resolves on the eḻuppu of cycle 33.

---

⁹ibid., p.182
tiśra gati; cycles 33-56

sarvalaghu; cycles 33-40 (5:06)

Cycles 33-36 center on the contrast between relatively spare patterns, e.g.

l- - - ta - l̄din - - - din - l̄na - - -
  ta ka l̄din - - - din - l̄na -

and

l̄din - - - din - l̄- - na - - - l̄ta - ta - din - l̄- - na - - - l

and the much denser suffixes, e.g.

l̄din - trḡl̄tktr l̄k̄tk tktr k̄tk l

At the end of cycle 36 (5:40), he introduces the figure

 ta - ta ki ṭa ta ka jo ṇu
    ta ka ta ka ta din - - ta - k t t k t r k t tom

as a suffix to the much more spare patterns shown above. Murthy ends the next four half-cycles with this pattern, which he says was inspired by bharata nātyam aḷavus. In fact, when reciting this pattern he gestures in imitation of a dancer. This is an example of material used not so much for cadential, but for motivic effect, by drawing into his work other types of inspiration. Indeed, he had composed an entire set of jatis for a tillana.
śaṅkīrṇa motif; cycles 41-44 (6:32)

On beat 2, cycle 41 (6:32), Murthy begins an elaboration of nine-pulse figures, beginning with the simple

\[
\begin{align*}
\mathit{l}ta & \mathit{di} \mathit{ki} \mathit{lt}a \mathit{tom} \\
\mathit{ta} & \mathit{di} \mathit{l}ki \mathit{ta} \mathit{tom}
\end{align*}
\]

He then elaborates it into the extremely dense version

\[
\begin{align*}
\mathit{ld}in & \mathit{nan} \mathit{k} \mathit{t} \mathit{t} \mathit{k} \mathit{ta} \mathit{lt} \mathit{a} \\
nan & \mathit{k} \mathit{t} \mathit{t} \mathit{k} \mathit{ta} \mathit{lt} \mathit{a} \\
\mathit{di} & \mathit{na} \mathit{k} \mathit{t} \mathit{t} \mathit{k}
\end{align*}
\]

which he continues through the end of cycle 44.

Körvai 5; cycles 46-49

preparation

Cycle 45 functions as a transition from the extremely dense playing that preceded it to the körvai that follows. As was the case with körvai 3, the preparation is made up of harder sounds that seem to be carrying the flow of time, rather than expressing a particular rhythmic idea.
structure

Once again, the körvai is in the ‘ta din gi ṇa tom’ form, and once again, as in körvai 4, it must be played three times in order to coincide with a mātra. In this case, however, the reason does not have to do with any distortion of the material. The körvai comprises 128 pulses, exactly right for ādi tāḷa, eḻuppu-to-eḻuppu, assuming that it is played in caturaśra gati. The solkāṭṭu follows:

Stage One; each syllable = 12 pulses (total 60)
ta - - - - - - - - - -
di - - - - - - - - - -
ki - - - - - - - - - -
ta - - - - - - - - - -
tom - - - - - - - - - -

Stage Two; each syllable = 6 pulses (total 30)
ta - - - -
di - - - -
ki - - - -
ta - - - -
tom - - - -

Stage Three; each syllable = 3 pulses (total 15)
ta - ta di - di ki - ki ṭa - ṭa tom - tom

mōrā (23 pulses)
ta di ki ṭa tom \(x_1=5\) - \([y=1]\)
ta ka ta di ki ṭa tom \(x_2=7\) - \([y=1]\)
ta ka di ku ta di ki ṭa tom \(x_3=9\)
treatment

It is not a structural demand that results in this kōrvai requiring three repetitions to coincide with a mātra, but a demand generated by its treatment (7:19, 7:31, 7:43). Murthy plays it in tiśra gāti; thus each repetition is not 128/8, or sixteen beats long, but 128/12, or ten and two-thirds beats. In other words, the three repetitions have a total duration of thirty-two beats.

caturaśra motif; cycles 50-52 (8:03)

After a brief sarvalaghu interlude, the caturaśra jāti mōrā

\[
\begin{align*}
| & - & \text{ta ka jo ŋu} & \text{ltam} - \\
\text{ta ka jo ŋu} & \text{ltam} - \\
\text{ta ka jo ŋu} & \text{[tam]}
\end{align*}
\]

is used to end the next four half-cycles, as if each half-cycle had an eḻuppu; that is, each repetition resolves on the second half of each first or fifth beat. At the end of cycle 51, he introduces a variation of the same duration:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta ka jo ŋu} & (x_1=4) \\
\text{tam} & - [y=2] \\
\text{ta ki ŭa} & (x_2=3) \\
\text{tam} & - [y=2] \\
\text{ta ka} & (x_3=2) \\
\text{tam} & - [y=2] \\
\text{ta} & (x_4=1) \text{[tam]}
\end{align*}
\]
This figure is an interesting example of the permissibility of a mōrā with more than three ‘x’ figures and more than two ‘y’ figures when it is demonstrably derived from accepted paradigms, or when it represents an exhaustive gopucca yati reduction.¹⁰ Murthy plays this figure once more, at the end of cycle 52. His own description of it follows: In the transcribed quotation, the first mōrā represents what he actually played, while the second and third are legitimate possibilities that he might have used to elaborate this idea, but chose not to:

TKM: (stops at 8:05); I have shown the eduppu with that mōrā; now, from the middle of beat six,

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{lta ki } & \text{ta} \\
\text{ta di ki } & \text{ltam -} \\
\text{ta di } & \text{ki ltam -} \\
\text{ta } & \text{di ki dtam} \\
\text{ta ka jo } & \text{nu ltam -} \\
\text{ta ki } & \text{ta tam l-} \\
\text{ta } & \text{ka tam -} \\
\text{ta } & \text{[tam]}
\end{align*}
\]

and then,

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{lta ka} \\
\text{ta } & \text{di - ki ltam} \\
\text{ta di - ki ltam} \\
\text{ta di - ki ltam} \\
\text{ta ka jo } & \text{nu ltam -} \\
\text{ta ki } & \text{ta tam l-}
\end{align*}
\]

¹⁰For a look at just how large such a reduction can become, see Mani, cycles 102 ff.
ta ka tam -
ta [tam]

or, from the sixth beat,

lta ka ta ki ṭa
   ta l- di - ki ṭa tom
lta - di - ki ṭa ltom
   ta - di - ki lta tom
   ta ka jo ṯu ltam -
   ta ki ṭa tam l-
   ta ka tam -
   ta [tam]

like that, leaving three at the beginning, I was just developing it.\textsuperscript{11}

\textbf{Körvai 6; cycles 54-56 (8:33)

preparation}

Once again, he uses hard strokes in a very regular rhythm as a transition to a sudden introduction of the körvai.
structure/treatment

This körvai reveals still another aspect of the relationship between sama and eçuppu. As the analysis will show, it is designed to begin on the sama and resolve on the eçuppu only after three repetitions.

Section A ; 40 pulses

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{ta - di - ta - } k \, t \, t \, k \, t \, r \, k \, t \, \text{tom - } (12) \\
&\text{di - ta - } k \, t \, t \, k \, t \, r \, k \, t \, \text{tom - } (10) \\
&\text{ta - } k \, t \, t \, k \, t \, r \, k \, t \, \text{tom - } (8) \\
&\text{ki - } k \, t \, t \, k \, t \, r \, k \, t \, \text{tom - } (6) \\
&\text{ta - } r \, k \, t \, \text{tom - } (4)
\end{align*}
\]

Section B 36 pulses \(24+12\)

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{ta - - - di - - - - - ki - - - } \text{ta - - - tom - - - } (24) \\
&\text{ta - di - - - ki - } \text{ta - tom - } (12)
\end{align*}
\]

môrâ; 22 pulses

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{ta di - ki } \text{ta tom (x=6)} \\
&\text{ta - [y=2]} \\
&\text{ta di - ki } \text{ta tom (x=6)} \\
&\text{ta - [y=2]} \\
&\text{ta di - ki } \text{ta tom (x=6)}
\end{align*}
\]

The körvai represents two different types of diminution. The A section is a straight gopucca yati reduction from twelve to four pulses, while the B section and the first 'x' figure in the môrâ together represent a trikāla; The B section may thus be seen as having a 'bridge' function. As in körvai 1, the first 'x' has a double function as the last line of one section and the beginning of the môrâ.
The total number of pulses per repetition is 98, two more than would be required for the körvai to be eḻuppú-to-eḻuppú. As in körvai 3, material has been added to the ‘y’ figures in order that the composition will begin at the sama and end at the eḻuppú. As in körvai 4, the effect of the added material is that the körvai must be played three times before resolving on a hand gesture. Murthy composed this körvai with the inspiration of bharata nātyaṃ aḍavus.\textsuperscript{12}

\textit{caturaśra gati sarvalaghru; cycle 57 (9:00)}

The patterns played in cycle 57 and the beginning of cycle 58 are usually played toward the end of a solo

\textit{na ki ṭa tam - ta ki ṭa ta ki ṭa ta ki ṭa jo Ṽu}

\textit{transition to khaṇḍa gati; cycles 58-59 (9:13)}

The transition is accomplished by the use of a high-contrast suffix

\textit{ḷta - t r d ŋ k ṭ lt k t k t r k ṭ t k}

\textsuperscript{12}vol.2, p. 191
that follows the pattern set by the caturaśra motif above. That is, it ends midway through beats rather than at their beginnings, as if each resolution point were an eḻuppu.

Kōrvai 7; khaṇḍa gati—cycles 60-62 (9:28)

preparation

According to the style set from the beginning of this solo, this kōrvai begins abruptly following the last statement of the suffix above.

structure

Kōrvai 7 is in a straightforward two-part form; a three-stage gopucca reduction followed by a compound mōrā. Each of the ‘x’ figures is made up of three five-pulse phrases; in the following notation, five-pulse half-beat units are marked in order to reveal the means by which Murthy has prevented the five-pulse phrases from coinciding with mātras. Until the last group, they are progressively shifted—this shifting preserves rhythmic interest in the kōrvai.

\[^{13}\text{cycles 50-52}\]
Section A; 33 pulses
lta - di - ta lka jo Ṉu jo Ṉu ltan - gu {13}
di - lta ka jo Ṉu jo Ṉu tan - gu {11}
ta lka jo Ṉu jo Ṉu ltan - gu {9}

mōrā; 47 pulses
ta di lki ṭa tom
ta di lki ṭa tom
ta di lki ṭa tom (x=15) - [y=1]

ta ldi ki ṭa tom
ta ldi ki ṭa tom
ta ldi ki ṭa tom (x=15) - [y=1]

lta di ki ṭa tom
lta di ki ṭa tom
lta di ki ṭa tom (x=15)

treatment

Murthy is nodding briefly to khanḍa gati as he prepares to end his solo. In contrast with the other kūrvais he has played, this one is short, straightforward, and even eduppu-to-eduppu in all three repetitions (9:28, 9:37, 9:46). It is usual for one gati to be more fully exposed than the others—this solo is no exception. After devoting nearly half his solo to tiṣra gati, he touches khanḍam very lightly.
Ending section; cycles-63-73 (9:55)

After a brief exposition of paran patterns, Murthy begins his perīya, or long mōrā in cycle 66.

Long Mōrā; cycles 66-67

Murthy plays the identical version that Ramabhadravan played. It is extremely interesting that artists of the caliber and standing of Ramabhadravan and Murthy are using the same long mōrā any first-year student would play. Palghat Raghu’s comments seem appropriate here:

RR: The application, the maturity, the fullness. Whatever little you do, everything should have a fullness. It doesn’t come all of a sudden, however you practice. It takes time. Go on repeating the same thing, again and again, until it comes under your control so that nothing can shake you from it. That is what we call sādhanai—achievement. But for us it means also repeating again and again, so that you get that fullness...that life.

na - din - din - na -

has a life. That life you will be able to bring out only with maturity and practice.\(^\text{14}\)

Likewise, one presumes, the following mōrā:

\(^{14}\)vol.2, p.257
di - tan k t t k t r k t t k
  t k di tan k t t k t r k t t k
di - tan k t t k t r k t t k
t a t län g tom t a t län g tom
di - tan k t t k t r k t t k
  t k di tan k t t k t r k t t k
di - tan k t t k t r k t t k
t a t län g tom t a t län g tom
di - tan k t t k t r k t t k
  t k di tan k t t k t r k t t k
di - tan k t t k t r k t t k
t a t län g tom

t k di tan k t t k t r k t t k
t a t län g tom
di - tan k t t k t r k t t k

mörä
t a t län g tom
  t a tom
t a t län g tom
  t a tom
t a t län g tom

Final Körvai; cycles 68-73  (10:40)

structure
Murthy's final körvai is somewhat unusual, in two respects. First, it begins with an unsounded pulse. Second, the mörä employs an unusual form of deception with respect to the 'y' figures. Structurally, it recalls körvai 1 in its use of a suffix phrase, 'ta di ki ūta tom', that has a double function as the first line of 'x' in the mörä. The notation follows:

Section A; 74 pulses
l- ta ta - lki ūta - ta lka - din ta l- {13}
ta - - l- - - l- - ta di lki ūta tom {14}
ta lta - ki ūta l- ta ka - ldn ta - {12}
ta l- - - l- - - lta di ki ūta ltom {14}
ta ta - lki ūta - ta lka - din ta l- {12}
ta - - l- - - l- - {9}ta di lki ūta tom - l-
ta di ki lta tom -
ltta di ki ūta ltom - - (x_1=21)

    ta ldi ki ūta tom l-
ta di ki lta tom -
ta ldi ki ūta tom l- (x_2=18)

    ta di ki lta tom
    ta di lki ūta tom
    lldi ki ūta tom (x_3=15)

If this körvai had appeared anywhere else in the solo, the fact that it begins with an unsounded pulse would have provoked speculation concerning the deliberateness, or lack of it, of this feature. As a final körvai there can be no such speculation. One may safely assume that the composition is firmly committed to memory, and that its use is completely intentional.
What, then, is the aesthetic function of this device? The answer may be found in its relationship with the mōrā, which, as has been pointed out, has unusual features of its own. To be specific, there is a deceptive use of unsounded pulses following each repetition of the figure ‘ta di ki ĭa tom’. As can be seen from the discussion of the unique character of this figure and its relatives in the Raghu Analysis, there are aesthetic reasons for toying with the listener’s expectations regarding familiar material; this is clearly such a case.

Given the phrase ‘ta di ki ĭa tom - -’, the informed listener will almost certainly hear the two pulses of silence after ‘tom’ as the elements of an unarticulated ‘y’ figure, and expect that the ‘x₁’ will take the following form:

\[
\begin{align*}
(ta \ di \ ki \ ĭa \ tom) & \quad [- \ -] \ (x=5) \ [y=2] \\
(ta \ di \ ki \ ĭa \ tom) & \quad [- \ -] \ (x=5) \ [y=2] \\
(ta \ di \ ki \ ĭa \ tom) & \quad (x=5)
\end{align*}
\]

The inclusion of the two unsounded pulses after the third ‘ta di ki ĭa tom’ reveals the true shape of the ‘x₁’ as (x=7), [y=0]:

\[
\begin{align*}
ta \ di \ ki \ ĭa \ tom & \quad - \ - \ (x=7) \ [y=0] \\
ta \ di \ ki \ ĭa \ tom & \quad - \ - \ (x=7) \ [y=0] \\
ta \ di \ ki \ ĭa \ tom & \quad - \ - \ (x=7)
\end{align*}
\]

¹⁵pp. 13ff.
In the second and third stages of the mūrā, diminution is achieved by removing first one ('x₂'), and then both ('x₃') of the 'extra' pulses, lulling the listener into believing that the surprises are over with. Just at the point where three repetitions of 'ta di ki ūa tom' are executed with no surprise gaps, one is reminded that the kōrvāi begins with an unsounded pulse. Murthy thus ends his solo with one more deception, designed to surprise and delight his informed listeners.
MANI ANALYSIS

TOTAL CYCLES: 137
TOTAL TIME: 23' 6"
AVERAGE BPM: 47
FIRST MINUTE: 45
LAST MINUTE: 51

Vilamba Kāla; cycles 1-22

sarvalaghū and mōrās; cycles 1-19

The sarvalaghū pattern in this section is based exclusively on the archetype

ltā - din - ldn - na -

though he groups it into two-beat phrases, most often

ltam - - - l- - ta (ka) lta (ta) din - ldn - na -

The parenthetical syllables above indicate his most common elaboration.
The real action in these cycles takes place in the suffixes and small mōrās, which he calls arudis, that end nearly every half-cycle throughout the section. The first suffix comes at the end of beat four, cycle 3 (00:20):

\[ lki \text{ ta ta ka ta } \text{̣ān} - \text{ gu lta ka ta ka ta } \text{̣ān} - \text{ gu } \]

This is virtually identical to the suffix with which Murthy ended his second cycle:

\[ \text{ta - tom } \text{ ta } \text{̣ān} - \text{ gu ta ka ta ka ta } \text{̣ān} - \text{ gu } \]

In fact, Mani uses the phrase in exactly this form at the end of cycle 14, beat 4.

Beat 4, cycle 4 (00:30) is made up of four repetitions of the phrase

\[ \text{t r g ā tom } \]

of which the last one is reversed, as follows:

\[ \text{l t r g ā tom t r g ā tom l t r g ā tom \{tom t r g ā\}} \]

The same figure, in an elaborated form, occupies beats 6, 7 & 8 (00:33).

---

\(^1\)The examples are notated in half-time for ease in reading.
In beat 4, cycle 5, the figure is transformed into

\[ \text{di na t r g d} \]

which functions as 'x' in the first mōrā (00:41)

\[ \text{di na t r g d (x=4)} \]
\[ \text{ta - [y=2]} \]
\[ \text{di na t r g d (x=4)} \]
\[ \text{ta - [y=2]} \]
\[ \text{di na t r g d (x=4)} \]

Cycles 7-10 focus on the three-pulse ending pattern

\[ \text{tān - gu} \]

which is appended to the phrase

\[ \text{ltā - ki ta ta ka ta ki ltā ki ta ta ka \{tān - gu\}[tom]} \]

to take one full beat (1:09). In cycle 8, the \{tān - gu\} figure is played twice at the end of the phrase (1:19), which therefore must begin three pulses earlier. He prefixes the phrase with a five-pulse figure, so that the whole now takes one-and-a-half beats:
l(din - tān - gu)
ta - ki lṭa ta ka ta ka ta ki ṭa lṭa ka
tān - gu} {tān - gu} {tān - gu} {tom}

Setting the prefix figure as two plus three makes the next expansion quite straightforward:

l(din -) ta - ki ṭa ta ka lṭa ka ta ki ṭa ta ka
tān - gu} {tān - gu} {tān - gu} {tān - gu} {tom}

The next motif is set up during cycles 11-13 (1:51), and is based on the cadential figure

ta di ki ṭa tom

In cycles 11 and 12 (1:51-2:01), the mōrās based on this figure are two beats long. In cycle 13, the mōrā is four beats long.
cycle 11 mōrā (1:51)
ita di ki ṭa tom ta tom - l- -
    ta di ki ṭa tom
    ta lka ta di ki ṭa tom
ta ka īdi ku ta di ki ṭa tom ta [tom]

cycle 12 mōrā (2:01)
    ita di ki ṭa tom ta tom - l- -
    ta ka ta di ki ṭa lom ta tom - - -
ta ka īdi ku ta di ki ṭa tom ta [tom]

cycle 13 mōrā (2:09)
    ita di ki ṭa tom
    ta (x₁=6)
    tom - l- - [y=4]
    ta di ki ṭa tom
    ta lka ta di ki ṭa tom
    ta tom l- - -
    ta (x₂=18)
    tom - - - [y=4]
    ita di ki ṭa tom
    ta ka ta īdi ki ṭa tom
    ta ka īdi ku ita di ki ṭa tom
    ta tom - l- -
    ta tom - - -
    ta (x₃=32) [tom]

He refers to the third composition as an mōrā, but it is certainly more complex than the standard ‘x y x y x’ form. Each of the three sections has two parts, and each part expands to form the next section. The final stage, which functions as x₃, is itself in the mōrā form; it may be said to comprise two contrasting mōrās:
mōrā A
  ta di ki ṭa tom (x=5) [y=0]
  ta ka ta di ki ṭa tom (x=7) [y=0]
  ta ka di ku ta di ki ṭa tom (x=9)

where 'x' expands by two pulses in each repetition and 'y' remains zero, and

mōrā B
  ta (x=1)
  tom - - - [y=4]
  ta (x=1)
  tom - - - [y=4]
  ta (x=1) [tom]

The first mōrā represents the limit of 'y' values, where the second shows
the smallest possible value for x. The contrast is heightened by juxtaposing fully
articulated 'x' figures in mōrā A with minimally articulated 'y' figures in mōrā B.
The whole composition seems to unfold almost in the manner of a rose
blossom. One knows from the beginning that it is a rose; neither its color nor its
fragrance is ever in doubt, but one is fascinated by the process of opening.

Mani avers that this particular type of mōrā, in which the last 'x' serves a
second function as a self-contained mōrā which is implied, even necessitated,
by the development of the two preceding stages, is a recent phenomenon, for
which he claims some credit:

RM: ...this is a later development. To my knowledge, I found
this one. Maybe they were doing it and I never heard it.
They always played
ta di ki ṭa tom
she said to the man

then

ta di - ki ṭa tom
she said to the man
ta di - ki ṭa tom

and

ta - di - ki ṭa tom
she said to the man
ta - di - ki ṭa tom

it's only in the last twelve to fifteen years that we get

she said to the man

then

ta di - ki ṭa tom
she said to the man
ta di - ki ṭa tom

and ending

ta - di - ki ṭa tom
she said to the man
ta - di - ki ṭa tom
ta - di - ki ṭa tom

DN: So this type of thinking is your own?
RM: I think so. Sometimes I compose things; how they come
I don't know.²

Whether or not he was first to discover this application of mōrā structure, it
is certainly a refinement within the system, and has quickly entered the main
stream of mṛdaṅgam playing.³

Up to this point in his solo, Mani has chosen to resolve all his mōrās to the
sama rather than to the eṭuppu. This is deliberate:

RM:...I always compose these two- and three-akṣara arudis
for the sama, so we can be sure about that. Because we are
always depending on others (to keep the tāḷa). Otherwise, if
you just start with a kōrvai, it's a long time until the next
sama. This way we can be sure we are correct (before we
go into anything complicated)⁴

This is a curious point of view, given the strength of the tāḷa-keeper in this
particular performance, and the fact that all the other drummers have cadenced
either to the eṭuppu or to the fifth beat (as arudi) in nearly every case. As will be
increasingly clear, Mani conceives all his material so that it will fit easily with the
hand gestures of the tāḷa.

²vol.2, p. 204

³In fact there are examples in other solos, notably Sankaran's kōrvai 1, that suggest that
this idea may have occurred more or less simultaneously to several players.

⁴vol. 2, p.199
Körvai 1; cycles 20-22

preparation

After a false start in cycle 18 (2:58), Mani begins his first körvai from the eduppu of cycle 20.

lta di ki ta ltom -
    ta tom l- ta - tom l-
ta ka lta di ki ta ltom -
    ta tom l- ta - tom l-
ta tom - lta - tom - l-
ta ka di lku ta di ki lta tom -
    ta ltom - ta - ltom -
    ta tom l- ta - tom ll-
    ta tom - lta - tom - l-
    ta - ta ltom - ta - ltom -
    ta - lta tom - ta l- tom -
    ta l- ta tom - lta - tom - l-
    ta - ta l- ta tom - lta - tom -
lta - ta - lta tom - ta l- tom -
ta l- ta - ta lltom - ta - [tom]

structure

The körvai bears a strong thematic and structural resemblance to the mörä discussed in the preceding section. Both the progressive expansion of the figure
ta di ki ṭa tom

and its juxtaposition with the figure

ṭa tom - ṭa - ṭom -

recall the other mōrā. More striking still is the use of the same type of unfolding mōrā, but this time the third stage does triple, rather than double duty. First, it functions as ‘x₃’ in the apparent mōrā

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta di ki ṭa tom -} \\
\text{ṭa tom - ṭa - (x₁=11)} \\
\text{ṭom - - [y=3]} \\
\text{ṭa ka ta di ki ṭa tom -} \\
\text{ṭa tom - ṭa - ṭom -} \\
\text{ṭa tom - ṭa - (x₂=20)} \\
\text{ṭom - - [y=3]} \\
\text{ṭa ka di ku ta di ki ṭa tom -} \\
\text{ṭa tom - ṭa - ṭom -} \\
\text{ṭa tom - ṭa - ṭom -} \\
\text{ṭa tom - ṭa - (x₃=29) [ṭom]} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Second, as in the previous example, ‘x₃’ can be seen as a self-contained mōrā:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ṭa tom - ṭa - (x=5)} \\
\text{ṭom - [y=2]} \\
\text{ṭa tom - ṭa - (x=5)} \\
\text{ṭom - [y=2]} \\
\text{ṭa tom - ṭa - (x=5)} \\
\end{align*}
\]
The third function is as ‘$x_1$’ in the mörä that completes the körvai. In this sense it represents both the full expansion of

```
ta tom - ta -
```

from the end of the first line into the triple cadential form, and the first, as yet unexpanded statement of the larger mörä:

```
ta tom - ta - tom -
ta tom - ta - tom -
ta tom - ta - (x_1=19)
tom - - [y=3]
ta - ta tom - ta - tom -
ta - ta tom - ta - tom -
ta - ta tom - ta - (x_2=25)
tom - - [y=3]
ta - ta - ta tom - ta - tom -
ta - ta - ta tom - ta - tom -
ta - ta - ta tom - ta - (x_3=31) [tom]
```

treatment

The most noteworthy aspect of Mani’s treatment of this körvai is that it apparently is played twice, once so that it takes two full cycles (3:20) and once so that it takes one cycle (3:41), i.e.twice as fast. It is axiomatic in Karnāṭak music that a körvai is performed either once or three times, but never twice.
Mani’s defense in this case is the same as Raghu’s—that he had not in fact played it twice, but once in the slow kāla and once in the fast kāla; in other words, once and once, rather than twice.\(^6\)

For both Mani and Raghu, the justification for playing a kōrvai twice seems to require that the composition be eṭuppu-to-eṭuppu in both speeds. In Mani’s case, the first speed takes two cycles and the second takes one; in Raghu’s, the first is three cycles and the second is two. Just to be on the safe side, Mani appeals to precedent:

Palghat Mani Iyer used to play like this quite often. He inspired me to compose these types of kōrvais. I’ve composed so many of them—first kāla, then second kāla.\(^7\)

**Madhyama Kāla; cycles 23-116**

After a brief reprise of the vilamba kāla sarvalaghu pattern with which he began:

\[lta - din - ldin - na - \]

\(^5\)vol.2, p. 245

\(^6\)vol.2, p.200

\(^7\)ibid., p.201
he begins a filled-out version based on the first half,

\[
\text{ta na di na ta na di na} \\
\text{n n O n n n O n} \\
\text{G G G G}
\]

which is characterized by a strong accent on the middle of the beat, indicated in bold type. This section seems to be a showcase both for the strength, clarity and stamina of Mani's right hand and for the beauty of his gumiki embellishments.

**Körvai 2; cycles 29-30**

**preparation**

The körvai is prepared by ending the three preceding half-cycles (4:41, 4:46, 4:51) with its introductory phrase;

\[
\text{ta - di - ta ri ki ŭ ta ka ta na ta ka ta ri ki ŭ ta ta ka} 8
\]

---

8This is notated as if it were twenty pulses in duration, for convenience in reading. It is actually played at twice that speed, viz. in the space of ten pulses. The analysis will make use of the larger numbers in order to avoid confusion with the notation.
structure

The körvai itself begins on the eşuppu, cycle 29, and goes as follows:

section A:
Ita - di - ta ri ki ṭa Ita ka ta na ta ka ta ri lki ṭa ta ka
ta ka di na l
ta ka di na
ta ka di na ltam - - - -
ta ka ldi na
ta ka di na
ta ka ldi na tam - - - -
Ita ka di na
ta ka di na
Ita ka di na tam - - l- -
ta - di - ta ri lki ṭa ta ka ta na ta ka Ita ri ki ṭa ta ka
ta ka ldi na
ta ka di na ltam - l- -
ta ka di na
ta ka ldi na tam - -
ta ka lldi na
ta ka di na tam - l- -
ta - di - ta ri lki ṭa ta ka ta na ta ka Ita ri ki ṭa ta ka
ta ka ldi na tam -
ta ka di na ltam -
ta ka di na tam -
mörä: tiśra gati
Ita ka ta -
ta ka lta -
ta ka ta -
Ita di ki òta tom \( (x_1=17) \)

ta lka ta -
ta ka ta l-
ta ka ta -
ta ldi ki òta tom
da di lki òta tom \( (x_2=22) \)

ta ka ta l-
ta ka ta -
ta lka ta -
ta di ki òta tom
da di ki òta lltom
da di ki òta tom \( (x_3=27) \)

The kōrvai is in two contrasted sections. The first mimics the mörä form without actually assuming it. If it were in the mörä form, the first part of section A might be expected to end as follows:

ta - di - ta ri ki òta ka ta ta na ta ka ta ri ki òta ta ka
ta ka di na
ta ka di na
ta ka di na tam - - - -
ta ka di na
ta ka di na
ta ka di na tam - - - -
ta ka di na
ta ka di na
	ta ka di na [tam]
The section represents an orderly reduction within its three parts: after the initial twenty-pulse phrase, the quasi-mōrās reduce as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{di} \quad \text{na} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{di} \quad \text{na} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{di} \quad \text{na} \quad \{12\} \\
\text{tam} & \quad \text{-} \quad \text{-} \quad \text{-} \quad \text{-} \quad \{6\} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{di} \quad \text{na} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{di} \quad \text{na} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{di} \quad \text{na} \quad \{12\} \\
\text{tam} & \quad \text{-} \quad \text{-} \quad \text{-} \quad \text{-} \quad \{6\} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{di} \quad \text{na} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{di} \quad \text{na} \quad \{8\} \\
\text{tam} & \quad \text{-} \quad \text{-} \quad \{4\} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{di} \quad \text{na} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{di} \quad \text{na} \quad \{8\} \\
\text{tam} & \quad \text{-} \quad \text{-} \quad \{4\} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{di} \quad \text{na} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{di} \quad \text{na} \quad \{8\} \\
\text{tam} & \quad \text{-} \quad \text{-} \quad \{4\} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{di} \quad \text{na} \quad \{4\} \\
\text{tam} & \quad \text{-} \quad \{2\} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{di} \quad \text{na} \quad \{4\} \\
\text{tam} & \quad \text{-} \quad \{2\} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{di} \quad \text{na} \quad \{4\} \\
\text{tam} & \quad \text{-} \quad \{2\}
\end{align*}
\]
The section's total duration in pulses is \(20+54 \cdot 20+36+20+18\)=168. At eight pulses per mātra, he has used twenty-one mātras so far. The mōrā is in the unfolding form with which the listener is now familiar; each 'x' figure begins with three repetitions of the four-pulse phrase,

\[
\text{ta ka ta -}
\]

and finishes with one, two, and then three statements of

\[
\text{ta di ki ta tom}
\]

The three 'x' figures occupy 17, 22, and 27 pulses respectively, for a total of sixty-six; at six pulses per mātra, the total is eleven. Combined with section A, the kōrvai takes thirty-two mātras, or sixteen beats, i.e. two cycles, eḻuppu-to-eḻuppu.

**treatment**

He plays the kōrvai only once (4:53), and while he might have used it as a transition into a tīśra gati section of the solo, he does not. Though it is entirely within the bounds of traditional propriety to play a kōrvai just once if it is eḻuppu-to-eḻuppu, we discussed it:

DN: ...Again, this is something you only play once. Is that because of the structure of it?
RM: No, it's because I wanted to give more material for you, so I didn't want to repeat it... 9

sarvalaghū; cycles 31-38 (5:13)

After playing a simple arudi into beat 5, cycle 31, Mani plays another madhyama kāla pattern based on

lta - din - ldin - na -

Whereas the previous pattern was based only on the first half, the sarvalaghū used throughout cycles 31-34 is a filled-out version of the whole figure (5:23):

lta na di na kī na ta na
N n O n O n N n
G G G G G

Cycles 35-38 (5:55) employ another derivative of

lta - din - ldin - na -

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but this time there are half as many, rather than twice as many, articulations. In the example below, syllables in parentheses indicate those excluded in this variation:

\[ \text{tā - din} - (\text{din}) - \text{na} - (\text{ta}) - \text{din} - (\text{din}) - \text{na} - l^{10} \]

The use of such a sparsely articulated pattern serves to heighten the contrast with the suffixes in the section, which are not only dense in character, but employ a large number of hard left-hand strokes; e.g.

\[ (\text{ta}) - \text{din} - (\text{din}) - \text{na} - l - - \text{tam} - l - \text{tam} - \text{k t l j n k t t r k t} \]

The suffix figure is expanded, from ten pulses in cycle 34 (5:52), to twenty-four pulses in cycle 36 (6:07), and finally to thirty-two pulses in cycles 37 and 38 (6:17-27), before he finishes the idea with the mōrā in cycle 39.

---

\(^{10}\)For other examples of this variation, see Murthy, cycles 9-10, and Raghu, cycles 1ff.
môrâ; cycle 39 (6:34)

The solkaṭṭu may be represented as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta ri } & \text{ ki } \text{ta } \text{ta } \text{ka } \text{lta } \text{ka } \text{jo } \nu & \text{- -} \\
\text{ta ri } & \text{ lki } \text{ta } \text{ta } \text{ka } \text{ta } \text{ka } \text{jo } \nu & \text{l- -} \\
\text{ta ri } & \text{ ki } \text{ta } \text{ta } \text{ka } \text{lta } \text{ka } \text{jo } \nu & (x=34) \\
& \text{ta} & \text{- - - l- - din} & \text{- - - -} & [y=12] \\
\text{lta ri } & \text{ ki } \text{ta } \text{ta } \text{ka } \text{ta } \text{ka } \text{ljo } \nu & \text{- -} \\
\text{ta ri } & \text{ ki } \text{ta } \text{lta } \text{ka } \text{ta } \text{ka } \text{jo } \nu & \text{- -} \\
\text{lta ri } & \text{ ki } \text{ta } \text{ta } \text{ka } \text{ta } \text{ka } \text{ljo } \nu & (x=34) \\
& \text{ta} & \text{- - - - ldin} & \text{- - - -} & [y=12] \\
\text{ta ri } & \text{lki } \text{ta } \text{ta } \text{ka } \text{ta } \text{ka } \text{jo } \nu & \text{l- -} \\
\text{ta ri } & \text{ ki } \text{ta } \text{ta } \text{ka } \text{lta } \text{ka } \text{jo } \nu & \text{- -} \\
\text{ta ri } & \text{lki } \text{ta } \text{ta } \text{ka } \text{ta } \text{ka } \text{jo } \nu & (x=34) [\text{tam}] \\
\end{align*}
\]

This representation results in a total of 126 pulses, and requires that the môrâ begin two pulses after the eṭuppu in order to resolve on the eṭuppu one cycle later.\textsuperscript{11} Analyzed in this way, the môrâ appears to be in the compound form seen previously; each ‘x’ figure is itself in the ‘x y x y x’ form, where \((x=10)\) and \([y=2]\).

While the preceding analysis is entirely satisfactory, another possibility presents itself. If Mani, as is usual for him, is thinking eṭuppu-to-eṭuppu, he may conceive the initial two pulses, which are not included in the preceding analysis, as actually beginning the môrâ. If this is the case, then the final two

\textsuperscript{11}As in the analysis of körvai 2 above, the notation will proceed as if the composition had been played at half its actual speed.
syllables of each 'y' figure must function instead as the initial two pulses of the second and third 'x' respectively. Represented in solktu,

l- - ta ri ki ta ta ka lta ka jo ṅu
- - ta ri lki ta ta ka ta ka jo ṅu
l- - ta ri ki ta ta ka lta ka jo ṅu (x=36) ta - - - l- - din - - - [y=10]
- - lta ri ki ta ta ka ta ka ljo ṅu
- - ta ri ki ta lta ka ta ka jo ṅu
- - lta ri ki ta ta ka ta ka ljo ṅu (x=36) ta - - - - ldin - - - [y=10]
- - ta ri lki ta ta ka ta ka jo ṅu
l- - ta ri ki ta ta ka lta ka jo ṅu
- - ta ri lki ta ta ka ta ka jo ṅu (x=36) [tam]

This analysis requires that the fourth and fifth unarticulated pulses following the syllable 'din' above, be conceived as different in function from the three that precede them. Thus,

{...din - - - } (- - ...)

where the figure enclosed in { } is included in 'y' and the figure enclosed in ( ) is included in 'x'. The only evidence that supports this unusual but not implausible interpretation is that the two bracketed pulses are articulated in the last line of the mōrā.

- - ta ri lki ta ta ka ta ka jo ṅu
l- - ta ri ki ta ta ka lta ka jo ṅu
[tta ka] ta ri ki ta ta ka ta ka jo ṅu (x=36) [tam]
One such statement does not constitute a conclusive demonstration of the proposed analysis, but it certainly does not refute it. Such ambiguity is a natural feature of this art form, in which concealment is an entirely acceptable aesthetic device.\textsuperscript{12} In Mani’s case, it is quite common for the structure of a composition to be straightforward, while the articulated version may conceal the underlying simplicity. I believe that this is exactly such an instance, and that the articulation of the initial two pulses of the final line is in fact an important clue in determining his intention.

\textit{sarvalaghu; cycles 40-67}

The fully articulated pattern (6:49),

\begin{verbatim}
ldi ṇa ta ṇa lta ta di ṇa ldi ṇa ta ṇa lta ta di ṇa
\end{verbatim}

is introduced by its somewhat less articulated variation

\begin{verbatim}
ldin - ta ṇa lta ta din - l- - ta ṇa lta ta din -
\end{verbatim}

There are one-beat suffixes at the end of all the half-cycles from cycle 43 through 45 (7:24), but the main interest in the section is generated by the repetition of the sarvalaghu pattern itself, in the context set by Mani’s use of the

\textsuperscript{12}It can even be used a major organizing principle for a solo, e.g. Murthy.
left hand. In general, the left hand is used quite sparingly, and then almost exclusively as gumiki.

The right hand pattern has by now created an extremely regular, ostinato effect, which is heightened in the next pattern by the use of only two strokes, both of them tonal, and both played only with the index finger (8:05).

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
\text{ta} & \text{din} & \text{din} & \text{din} & \text{ta} & \text{ta} & \text{din} & \text{din} \\
\text{N} & \text{O} & \text{O} & \text{O} & \text{N} & \text{N} & \text{O} & \text{O} \\
\end{array}
\]

While the strokes may have changed, the accent structure remains regular, essentially

\[
\{[\text{din - }][\text{din - }]\} \{[\text{ta ta}][\text{din - }]\}
\]

But in cycle 48 (8:09), all right hand strokes except the initial 'nam' have been transformed into 'din'.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
\text{ta} & \text{din} & \text{din} & \text{din} & \text{kin} & \text{din} & \text{din} & \text{din} & \text{lin} \\
\text{N} & \text{O} & \text{O} & \text{O} & \text{O} & \text{O} & \text{O} & \text{O} \\
\end{array}
\]

Now the line is without an accent other than the initial one: the left hand provides a new accent structure:

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
\text{ta} & \text{din} & \text{din} & \text{din} & \text{kin} & \text{din} & \text{din} & \text{din} & \text{lin} \\
\text{N} & \text{O} & \text{O} & \text{O} & \text{O} & \text{O} & \text{O} & \text{O} \\
\text{G} & \text{G} & \text{G} & \text{G} & \text{G} & \text{G} & \text{G} & \text{G} \\
\end{array}
\]
or three-three-two. Mani has gone from an accent structure defined to a large extent by the stroke pattern of the right hand,

\[ \text{ki na ta na ta di na kdi na ta na ta da di na} \]
\[ \text{On N N T T O n O n N i T T O n} \]
to a situation in which the right hand pattern is so undifferentiated that the left hand pattern defines the accents.

Cycles 49-66 (8:19-11:30) provide an opportunity to experience the strength, stamina and rhythmic control for which Mani is justifiably famous. The section is made up entirely of sarvalaghu patterns in which he employs a wide variety of double-time fingerings and shifted accents. This section is much better listened to than analyzed.

**Change to míśra gati including körvaï 3; cycles 67-77**

This entire section will be analyzed as a whole, since it is through-composed. The körvaï grows naturally out of the preparatory sections, as will be seen below. The actual composition in this case is preceded by the introduction of its primary phrase

\[ \text{ldin - tan t r lk Ŧ ta din ta ldin - - - l} \]
After two full cycles of the introductory statement, the composition itself begins at the ēḍuppū, cycle 69. It begins with an alternation between caturaśra gati and miśra gati that settles in the latter after four-and-a-half cycles. In the following notation, the first stage of this alternation is represented graphically, while subsequent stages are notated in the usual manner. The line over the phrase represents the akṣara, while the lines underneath indicate the gati.

Section I; part 1 (11:50)
caturaśra

din - nan kṭṭ k di ṇa din - di ṇa tan kṭṭ k

din na tan kṭṭ k di na din - di na tan kṭṭ k

din - nan kṭṭ k di ṇa din - di ṇa tan kṭṭ k

ta - tom - - - ta - tom - - ta -
Section I; part 2

caturaśra (12:05)

ldin - nan k t lt k di na din l- di na tan lk t t k
din na ltan k t t k di lna din - di llna tan k t t k
ldin - nan k t lt k di na din l- di na tan lk t t k
ta ka ltom - - -
ta ka tom - l- -
ta ka ltam - - - l- - -

miśra (12:15)

ldin - nan k t t k di na ldin - di na tan k t t k
ldin na tan k t t k di na ldin - di na tan k t t k
ldin - nan k t t k di na ldin - di na tan k t t k
lta ka tom - - -
ta llnka tom - - -
ta ka Section I; part 3

caturaśra (12:21)

ldin - nan k t lt k di na din l- di na tan lk t t k
din na ltan k t t k di lna din - di llna tan k t t k
ldin - nan k t lt k di na din l- di na tan lk t t k
ta tom l- - -
ta llnka tom - - - l-
ta ka lta ltam - - - ll- - -

miśra (12:31)

ldin - nan k t t k di na ldin - di na tan k t t k
ldin na tan k t t k di na ldin - di na tan k t t k
ldin - nan k t t k di na ldin - di na tan k t t k
lta tom - - -
ta ka ltom - - -
ta ka lta
Section II (reduction); Stage 1 (12:35)

ldin - nan k t t k di na ldnin - di na tan k t t k
ldin na tan k t t k di na ldnin - di na tan k t t k
ldin - nan k t t k di na ldnin - di na tan k t t k
ltan - tom - - -
ta l- tom - - -
ta -

ldin - nan k t t k di na ldnin - di na tan k t t k
ldin na tan k t t k di na ldnin - di na tan k t t k
ldin - nan k t t k di na ldnin - di na tan k t t k
ltan - tom - - -
ta l- tom - - -
ta -
Section II (reduction); Stage 2 (12:46)
ltă - tom - - -
tă l- tom - - -
tă -
ltă - tom - - -
tă l- tom - - -
tă -
ltă - tom - - -
tă l- tom - - -
tă -
ltă - tom - - -
tă l- tom - - -
tă -

Section III: körvai (12:52)
first repetition
ltă - ton - gu
tă ka lťă - ton - gu
tă ka lđi ku tă - ton - gu
lťă - ton - gu
tă ka lťă - ton - gu
tă ka lđi ku tă - ton - gu
lťă - ton - gu
tă ka lťă - ton - gu
tă ka lđi ku tă - ton - gu
mōrā
lta  di  ki  ŭa  tom
ta  di  lki  ŭa  tom
ta  di  ki  ŭa  ltom
    tam -
ta  di  ki  ŭa  ltom
ta  di  ki  ŭa  tom
ta  ldi  ki  ŭa  tom
    tam -
ta  ldi  ki  ŭa  tom
ta  di  ki  l-lat  ŭa  tom
ta  di  ki  ŭa  tom

second repetition
  lta  -  ton  -  gu
  ta  -  lton  -  gu
  ta  -  ton  -  lgu
  ta  ka  ta  -  ton  -  lgu
  ta  ka  ta  -  ton  -  lgu
  ta  ka  ta  -  ton  -  lgu
  ta  ka  di  ku  ta  -  lton  -  gu
  ta  ka  di  ku  lta  -  ton  -  gu
  ta  ka  ldi  ku  ta  -  ton  -  gu
mōrā
  lki  ŭa  tom
  ki  ŭa  tom
  ki  l-lat  ŭa  tom - -
ta  -  ki  l-lat  ŭa  tom
ta  -  ki  ŭa  tom
lta  -  ki  ŭa  tom - -
ltta  -  di  -  ki  ŭa  tom
ltta  -  di  -  ki  ŭa  tom
llltta  -  di  -  ki  ŭa  tom
third repetition (13:13)

lta ka ton - gu

ta ka lton - gu

ta ka ton - lgu

ta ka ta ka ton - lgu

ta ka ta ka ton - lgu

ta ka ka ton - lgu

ta ka di ku ta ka lton - gu

ta ka di ku lta ka ton - gu

ta ka ldi ku ta ka ton - gu

mörä

lta - di - ki ūta tom

lta - di - ki ūta tom

lta - di - ki ūta tom -

ta - ki ūta tom

lta - ki ūta tom

ta - lki ūta ton -

ki ūta ltonom

ki ūta tom

ki ūta tom [ta]

background

This composition is a text-book example of Mani’s style of thinking about
gati changes. His main influence in the approach to transition design seems to
have been Palani Subramania Pillai,\textsuperscript{13} who used two different approaches in
these transitions; one may be referred to as phrase-based, the other as akṣara-based.
In the former, a phrase or composition that fits quite comfortably in
caturaśra gati is transferred intact to another gati; nothing in the pattern would
necessarily suggest a subdivision shift. The success and smoothness of the gati
shift depended on the drummer's and the tāla-keeper's mutual ability to reveal
the accurate interrelationship of pattern with beat structure. For example, a
simple four-pulse phrase such as

\begin{center}
\texttt{ta\ ka\ di\ mi}\textsuperscript{14}
\end{center}

repeated four times in caturaśra gati, will coincide exactly with the beats:

\begin{center}
\texttt{\textit{lta}\ ka\ di\ mi\ \textit{lta}\ ka\ di\ mi\ \textit{lta}\ ka\ di\ mi\ \textit{lta}\ ka\ di\ mi}
\end{center}

but if the drummer changes the gati, for example to khaṇḍa, he will have to
repeat the figure five times in the same four beats, resulting in a somewhat
complicated relationship;

\begin{center}
\texttt{\textit{lta}\ ka\ di\ mi\ \textit{ta}\ lka\ di\ mi\ \textit{ta}\ ka\ ldi\ mi\ \textit{ta}\ ka\ di\ lmi\ \textit{ta}\ ka\ di\ mi}
\end{center}

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{13}See Mani Interviews One and Two, vol.2
\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{14}This phrase must be taken as symbolic of potentially much larger structures. In
Sankaran cycles 21-27, for example, the material transformed in this fashion comprises three full
cycles. The difficulty of executing such transformed material is usually much greater than that of
conceiving it in the first place.
The fact that such changes can be made with no warning requires tremendous alertness on the part of the tāḷa-keeper, especially as the structures involved become larger. At the same time, the drummer retains the flexibility to shift the subdivision at will, according to improvisational demands. The future remains, to a certain extent, unforeseeable. In this approach the phrase-shape is maintained while the gati is shifted, giving rise to great aesthetic tension.

In the akṣara-based approach, Palani Subramania Pillai introduced the idea of altering material from the gati of origin so that it would fit comfortably in the destination gati. His most famous use of this device involved the following switch to khaṇḍa gati, used by both Sankaran and Raghu in this study. The following caturaṣra gati sarvalaghu figure,

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{jo ṇu ta jo ṇu ta jo ṇu} \\
\end{array}
\]

might be alternated with its khaṇḍa gati variant,

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{jo ṇu ta jo ṇu ta ṇa ta jo ṇu} \\
\end{array}
\]

\[15\text{For some drummers, notably Murthy in this study, this aspect of the future enables the use of concealment as an important aesthetic device throughout a solo; see Murthy Analysis.}\]
for several beats, or even cycles, before settling fully into khaṇḍa gati. Where
the phrase-based approach generates tension, the akṣara-based approach
generates interest while remaining in the realm of sarvalaghu.

Mani’s approach is inspired by both devices. He composes according to
his intended subdivisional destination, rather than the gati of origin. Following
the example above, if he intends to shift to miśra gati, as in the present case, he
will initiate the change by introducing miśra jāti figures while still in caturaśra
gati, e.g.,

\[ \text{lta ka di mi lta \ ḳa di mi lta ki \ ṭa} \]
\[ \text{\ta ka di mi {\ṭa} \ lta \ ṭa \ ka di \ lmi \ ṭa ki \ ṭa} \]

The shift to miśram will now be more comfortable, for two reasons. First, the
tāla-keeper and audience have been warned, although they may not realize it
until the actual shift has taken place. Second, when the shift does take place,
the phrases match the hand gestures exactly; even though the idea of seven
pulses per beat may be difficult, the execution and audience understanding
have been simplified.

\[ \text{lta ka di mi lta \ lta ka di mi lta \ ḳa di mi lta ki \ ṭa} \]
\[ \text{\lṭa ka di mi {\ṭa} \ lta \ lta ka di mi \ lta ki \ ṭa} \]

In the phrase-based approach, the original gati and the pattern were both
easy to track, while the application of the pattern to a new gati created
difficulties in execution and understanding. In the akṣara-based approach, the
change may have been sudden, but the new material was in a close
relationship with the beat. In Mani’s approach, the eases and difficulties are spread between the origin and destination. The familiarity with the gati (caturaśra), diminishes the slight difficulty of playing miśra jāti patterns, while the unfamiliarity with miśra gati is eased by using patterns (miśra jāti) that coincide exactly with mātras.

structure

Overall, the transition section has three parts: section I, in which the gati shift occurs; section II, in which the körvai theme comes into prominence; and section III, the körvai itself, in three variations.

Section I is in the form A A A B, as follows:

caturaśra
A=ldin - nan k t lt k di na din l- di na tan lk t t k
A=din na ltan k t t k di lnna din - di lnna tan k t t k
A=ldin - nan k t lt k di na din l- di na tan lk t t k
B=ta - ltom - - -
   ta - tom - l- -
   ta - {ltam - - l- - -} 

Each line in the form consists of 14 pulses, or two sevens, making a total of 56 pulses, or eight sevens. Since, in caturaśra gati, each beat may be thought of as having eight pulses, the whole duration is seven beats. But as it is an important feature of the composition that it begin and end on eṉuṇṇu, he has
added the final eight-pulse ‘{tam...}’. This gives rise to a cadential effect, since
the ‘B’ line is actually in the mōra form;

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{ta} - (x=2) \\
&\text{tom} - - - [y=4] \\
&\text{ta} - (x=2) \\
&\text{tom} - - - [y=4] \\
&\text{ta} - (x=2) [\text{tom}]
\end{align*}
\]

Although the cadential effect in the caturaśra repetition is quite strong, the fact
that the cadence resolves a full beat early weakens it; the use of a strong
cadence in the ‘wrong’ place actually heightens the transitional effect of the
section. When the section is repeated in miśra gati, the final ‘tam’ is omitted; it
is arithmetically unnecessary, since the 56 pulses preceding it now occupy
exactly four beats. And since the ‘B’ line now resolves at a cadential strong
point (the second-half of beat five), the transition has been effectively achieved.

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{miśra} \\
&\text{ldin} - \text{nan} k t t k \text{ di} \text{ na \ ldin} - \text{ di} \text{ na tan} k t t k \\
&\text{ldin} \text{ na tan} k t t k \text{ di} \text{ na \ ldin} - \text{ di} \text{ na tan} k t t k \\
&\text{ldin} - \text{ nan} k t t k \text{ di} \text{ na \ ldin} - \text{ di} \text{ na tan} k t t k \\
&\text{lt} - \text{ tom} - - - \\
&\text{ta} \text{ l- tom} - - - \\
&\text{ta} - [\text{tam}]
\end{align*}
\]

However, Mani chooses to move back and forth between the gatis through
three stages before thoroughly committing himself to miśram. The three stages
are identical except for the following small variations in ‘B’:
B1
  ta - (x=2)
    tom - - - [y=4]
  ta - (x=2)
    tom - - - [y=4]
  ta - (x=2) [tom]

B2
  ta ka (x=2)
    tom - - - [y=4]
  ta ka (x=2)
    tom - - - [y=4]
  ta ka (x=2) [tom]

B3
  ta (x₁=1)
    tom - - - [y=4]
  ta ka (x₂=2)
    tom - - - [y=4]
  ta ki ta (x₃=3) [tom]

Section II

Once the transition has been accomplished, it becomes possible for the reduction in Section II to prepare the körvai. The form of the reduction is as follows:

Stage 1: 2{A A A B1}
Stage 2: 4{B1}
An apparently optional intermediate stage, \{A B\}, has been omitted in this particular performance.\textsuperscript{16}

It is interesting to note that the 'B' figure in Stage 2 is repeated four times. It has already been observed that this figure bears the mōrā form, and indeed functions more or less cadentially through the first two sections. In the present context, however, it may be seen as changing function; it is now introducing the thematic material out of which the kōrvaï will emerge. The quadruple repetition is not only arithmetically convenient (each repetition takes one beat), but it serves to weaken the cadential effect of its structure, while strengthening the transitional effect of its material.

Section III: the kōrvaï

All three repetitions of the kōrvaï represent the relationship

\[(9*7) + (7*7) = (16*7)\]

where '(9*7)', or sixty-three, refers to the number of pulses comprising the body of the kōrvaï, and '(7*7)', or forty-nine, is the duration of the mōrā.

\textsuperscript{16}vol 2, p. 209
first repetition

lta - ton - gu {5}
ta ka lta - ton - gu {7}
ta kal di ku ta - ton - gu {9}

lta - ton - gu {5}
ta ka lta - ton - gu {7}
ta kal di ku ta - ton - gu {9}

lta - ton - gu {5}
ta ka lta - ton - gu {7}
ta kal di ku ta - ton - gu {9} (5+7+9)*3=63
mörä
lta di ki ūta tom
ta di iki ūta tom
ta di ki ūta ltom (x=15)

tam - [y=2]
ta di ki ūta ltom
ta di ki ūta tom

ta ldi ki ūta tom (x=15)

tam - [y=2]
ta ldi ki ūta tom
ta di ki lta tom
ta di ki ūta tom (x=15) (15)+[2]+(15)+[2]+(15)=49

second repetition

lta - ton - gu
ta - lton - gu
ta - ton - lgu {5*3}

ta ka ta - ton - lgu
ta ka ta - ton - lgu
ta ka ta - ton - lgu {7*3}

ta ka di ku ta - lton - gu
ta ka di ku lta - ton - gu
ta kal di ku ta - ton - gu {9*3}
mörä

    kī ṣa tōm
    kī ṣa tōm
    kī l'ta tōm (x₁=9) - - [y=2]
ta - kī l'ta tōm
  tā - kī ṣa tōm
l'ta - kī ṣa tōm (x₂=15) - - [y=2]
l'ta - dī - kī ṣa tōm
l'ta - dī - kī ṣa tōm
l'ta - dī - kī ṣa tōm (x₃=21) (9)+[2]+(15)+[2]+(21)=49

third repetition

    l'ta kā tōn - gu
    tā kā l'ōn - gu
    tā kā tōn - l'gu {5*3}

    tā kā tā kā tōn - l'gu
    tā kā tā kā tōn - l'gu
    tā kā tā kā tōn - l'gu {7*3}

tā kā dī kū tā kā l'ōn - gu
tā kā dī kū l'ta kā tōn - gu
tā kā l'dī kū tā kā tōn - gu{9*3}
mörä

l'ta - dī - kī ṣa tōm
l'ta - dī - kī ṣa tōm
l'ta - dī - kī ṣa tōm (x₁=21) l - - [y=2]
tā - kī ṣa tōm
l'ta - kī ṣa tōm
tā - l'kī ṣa tōm (x₂=15) - - [y=2]
kī ṣa l'tōm
kī ṣa tōm
kī ṣa tōm (x₃=9) [tā] (21)+[2]+(15)+[2]+(9)=49
miśra gati; cycles 78-117 (13:23)

78-79

Mani begins his exposition of miśra gati with a subtle reference to the sarvalaghu archetype ‘ta din din na’

lta - - din - - din l- - nan - gu di na l

At the end of cycle 79, the following figure is appended (13:43);

[Figure]

In the usual fashion, the new figure is repeated more frequently, finally replacing the first figure entirely in the second half of cycle 80 (13:53). The use of a tonal stroke (‘nam’) at the beginning of the figure and a hard, accented stroke (‘ta’) at the end leads to the illusion that the pattern is actually beginning one pulse before the beat. This is not the structure of this particular pattern, however, but an auditory illusion that allows Mani to continue thinking in on-the-beat patterns while generating an apparently off-beat accent pattern.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{17}}\text{For a similar reference within a miśra context, see Raghu Interview 1: vol.2, p.95}\]
Cycles 83-87 maintain the apparently shifted accent.

\[ \text{ljo ्nu tān - gu ta - } \text{idin - din - na - ta l} \]

If one listens only to the pattern, and does not attend to its relationship with the tāḷa, its structure seems to be six plus eight;

\[ \{\text{ta jo ्nu tān - gu}\} \{\text{ta - din - din - na -}\} \]

It is possible that he used the previous pattern as a transition to this one; the former would have seemed to begin one-seventh beat early, while the latter actually does so. The listener cannot tell the difference between the two, since the auditory effect is the same. Mani's reason for using this type of transition would be psychological. He must establish the pulse structure of miśra gati by use of beat-to-beat patterns, at the same time preparing himself and the tāḷa-keeper for the shifting accent to come.

How can it be known whether the second pattern is in fact conceived as off-beat, rather than as another illusory accent? In this case there seems to be a tiny, but conclusive clue. Cycle 87 (14:56) comprises a three-stage reduction of the pattern

\[ \text{jo ्nu tān - gu ta - din - din - na - ta} \]
The syllables in bold type represent the syllables that are dropped in the next two stages:

\[ jo \, yu \, tan\,-\,gu \, ta\,-\,din\,-\,na\,-\,ta \]

and

\[ jo \, yu \, tan\,-\,gu \, ta\,-\,din\,-\,ta \]

Note that the syllables being removed are, according to this analysis, within the boundaries of the pattern. Ordinarily, such a reduction would remove syllables from the beginning or the end of a pattern, rather than from within. For example, if the alternative analysis of the figure is taken,

\[ \{ ta \, jo \, yu \, tan\,-\,gu \} \, \{ ta\,-\,din\,-\,din\,-\,na\,-\} \]

the reduction takes a more common course

\[ \{ ta \, jo \, yu \, tan\,-\,gu \} \, \{ ta\,-\,din\,-\,din\,-\,na\,-\} \]

\[ \{ ta \, jo \, yu \, tan\,-\,gu \} \, \{ ta\,-\,din\,-\,na\,-\} \]

\[ \{ ta \, jo \, yu \, tan\,-\,gu \} \, \{ ta\,-\,din\,-\} \]
The truth is revealed in beat 6, cycle 87 (15:02), where the mōrā begins. If the pattern were conceived as immediately above, the mōrā would begin immediately following the second statement of the last reduction, viz.

\[
\begin{align*}
\{\text{ta jo ṇu tān - gu}\} & \{\text{ta - din - } \textbf{din} - \text{ na -}\} \{14\} \\
\{\text{ta jo ṇu tān - gu}\} & \{\text{ta - din - } \textbf{din} - \text{ na -}\} \{14\} \\
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\{\text{ta jo ṇu tān - gu}\} & \{\text{ta - din - } \textbf{na} -\} \{12\} \\
\{\text{ta jo ṇu tān - gu}\} & \{\text{ta - din - } \textbf{na} -\} \{12\} \\
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\{\text{ta jo ṇu tān - gu}\} & \{\text{ta - din -}\} \{10\} \\
\{\text{ta jo ṇu tān - gu}\} & \{\text{ta - din -}\} \{10\} \\
\end{align*}
\]

\[
mōrā \\
\begin{align*}
\text{ta ki } \text{ta } \text{tom} & - \text{ ta } \text{di } \text{ki } \text{ta } \text{tom} \ (x=10) \\
& \text{ta - } [y=2] \\
\text{ta } & - \text{ta ki } \text{ta } \text{tom} - \text{ ta } \text{di } \text{ki } \text{ta } \text{tom} \ (x=12) \\
& \text{ta - } [y=2] \\
\text{ta } & - \text{ka } - \text{ta ki } \text{ta } \text{tom} - \text{ ta } \text{di } \text{ki } \text{ta } \text{tom} \ (x=14)
\end{align*}
\]

The total number of pulses is 112, or one full cycle of the tāḷa in miśra gati. But the example, as has been noted, begins one pulse before the eḻuṇṇu of cycle 87, leaving one pulse unaccounted for. If the other interpretation is used, beginning from the eḻuṇṇu itself, the reduction will proceed as follows:
jo ṇu tān - gu ta - din - din - na - ta {14}
jo ṇu tān - gu ta - din - din - na - ta {14}

jo ṇu tān - gu ta - din - na - ta {12}
jo ṇu tān - gu ta - din - na - ta {12}

jo ṇu tān - gu ta - din - [ta] {10}
jo ṇu tān - gu ta - din - [ta] {10}

mōrā

ta ki ṭa tom - ta di ki ṭa tom (x=10)
    ta - [y=2]

ta - ta ki ṭa tom - ta di ki ṭa tom (x=12)
    ta - [y=2]

ta - ka - ta ki ṭa tom - ta di ki ṭa tom (x=14)

The '*[ta]*' above is the clue that leads to the more accurate analysis. It is present in the music;¹⁸ under the alternate analysis it would necessarily be an 'extra', or 'filler' stroke, disturbing the symmetry of the line in order to make the mōrā begin in the right place. Such an analysis is by no means impossible, since the plans of mṛdaṅgam players share certain fabled characteristics with those of mice and other men; it is, however, less satisfying than the analysis proposed. It may be useful to recall at this point that Mani has composed and memorized many of the sequences used in this section.¹⁹ This fact lends further support to the notion that this entire section is conceived beat-to-beat, using the

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¹⁸Cycle 87, the ninth pulse of beat six (15:02)

¹⁹vol. 2, pp. 70-73
accented right hand stroke 'ta' at the end of each figure to create the illusion that the pattern starts on the last pulse of the previous beat.

**khaṇḍa motif; cycles 88-92**

This section is an excellent example of motivic development derived from structure-based possibility. In this case, the structural fact generating possibilities is that a mōrā has five parts; x, y, x, y, and x. If one pulse is added to each element of any mōrā, then its total duration will increase by five pulses. In a five-beat tāḷa or in khaṇḍa gati, a mōrā motif that took advantage of this fact would be an obvious choice. It is the application to a miśra context of a concept originating in khaṇḍa that leads to such interesting consequences in this section. Mani has chosen a thirteen-pulse mōrā as the subject for his motivic development;

mōrā 1

ta din - (x=3)

tam - [y=2]

ta din - (x=3)

tam - [y=2]

ta din - (x=3)

At first glance, thirteen seems to exhibit no important relation either to five or to seven, until there is attention to the fact that a two-beat group in miśra gati will comprise twenty-eight pulses, or fifteen plus thirteen. If the fifteen is further
broken down into its prime components, five and three, the logic of the section unfolds.

After six repetitions of the introductory figure (15:07)

\[ \text{din - ta din - ta - l- - ta di ki} \text{ ta tom} \]

which is organized five-four-five, Mani plays the set of four mörä made possible by the interplay outlined above; first, three fives plus the original mörä (15:15):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{din - ta din -} \\
\text{din - ta din -} \\
\text{din - ta din -} \\
\text{mörä 1} \\
\text{ta din - (x=3)} \\
\text{tam - [y=2]} \\
\text{ta din - (x=3)} \\
\text{tam - [y=2]} \\
\text{ta din - (x=3)}
\end{align*}
\]

Next, two fives plus mörä 2 (15:29), which will be five pulses longer than mörä 1:
mörä 2
  ta ka di na (x=4)
    tam - - [y=3]
  ta ka di na (x=4)
    tam - - [y=3]
  ta ka di na (x=4)

followed by one five plus mörä 3 (15:38), following the same five-pulse expansion;

din - ta din -

mörä 3
  ta ta ka di na (x=5)
    tam - - - [y=4]
  ta ta ka di na (x=5)
    tam - - - [y=4]
  ta ta ka di na (x=5)

The possibilities are exhausted by mörä 4 (15:46), which is itself twenty-eight pulses long;

mörä 4
  ta di - ki ṭa tom (x=6)
    tam - tam - - [y=5]
  ta di - ki ṭa tom (x=6)
    tam - tam - - [y=5]
  ta di - ki ṭa tom (x=6)
An interesting feature of this section is that each mōrā resolves at the middle of a beat in its two-beat group, as if it were an eḍuppū. Nor do the changes necessarily occur where one might expect, viz. the actual eḍuppū or at least the middle of beat five. Mōrā 1, for example, is repeated five times; the final repetition resolves at the middle of beat 3, cycle 90. Once again, Mani has weakened the cadential effect of material that actually fits cadential formulas in order to emphasize other possible functions. In cycle 74 above, his purpose was to shift emphasis to the thematic content of the mōrā figure. In this case, only the first mōrā is brought to an unusual resolution point, as if to suggest that something other than its cadential structure might be at issue.

As if to tie up all the loose ends, he ends the section with a compound mōrā (15:52):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{lt}a \text{ di} & - \text{ ki } \text{ ṭa } \text{ tom} \\
\text{ta ldi} & - \text{ ki } \text{ ṭa } \text{ tom} \\
\text{ta di l- ki } \text{ ṭa } \text{ tom} & - (x=18), [y=1] \\
\text{ta di l- ki } \text{ ṭa } \text{ tom} & \\
\text{ta di lki } \text{ ṭa } \text{ tom} & \\
\text{ta di l } \text{ ki lta tom} & - (x=18), [y=1] \\
\text{ta di l- ki lta tom} & \\
\text{ta di - ki iṭa tom} & \\
\text{ta di - ki ṭa ltom} & \\
\text{ta di - ki ṭa tom} & (x=18)
\end{align*}
\]
caturaśra motif; cycles 93-95

Following this mōrā, which resolves at the eḻuppu, cycle 93, Mani develops another idea that depends on twenty-eight pulse, or two beat, groups. This time the idea is based on caturaśra jāti figures of eight pulses each. After an introductory sarvalaghu pattern (15:52),

\[ ta - ki - ūta - tadi mi ta ki ūta jo ūnu \]

which is divided into phrases of six and eight, he begins cycle 94 with the figure

\[ ta - ka - tadi mi la ki ūta jo ūnu \]
\[ tadi lmi ta ki ūta jo ūnu \]
\[ tadi lmi ta ki ūta jo ūnu \]

which is grouped as 4+(3*8), or twenty-eight pulses. This two-beat figure is repeated with minor variations until the last two beats of cycle 95, when it is used in alternation with the twenty-eight pulse kōrvai theme discussed below.
Körvai 4; cycles 96-97 (16:30)

preparation

The introductory section of the körvai,

\[
\begin{align*}
ta & - di - ta \ ka \ di \ na \\
di & - ta \ ka \ di \ na \\
   & ta \ ka \ di \ na \\
   & ta \ ka \\
   & \text{tom -} \\
   & ta \ ka \\
   & \text{tom -} \\
   & ta \ ka
\end{align*}
\]

is repeated twice in preparation for the actual exposition of the whole; the first begins at the middle of beat 7, cycle 95, the second at the middle of beat 3, cycle 96.

structure

The introductory section of körvai 4, as it is played in its two preparatory statements above, is itself in the form of a simple körvai composed of an introductory three-stage reduction,

\[
\begin{align*}
ta & - di - ta \ ka \ di \ na \\
di & - ta \ ka \ di \ na \\
   & ta \ ka \ di \ na
\end{align*}
\]
and a small, but well-formed mōrā

\[
\begin{align*}
ta & \hspace{1em} \text{ka} \hspace{1em} \text{(x=2)} \\
& \hspace{1em} \text{tom} \hspace{1em} \text{[y=2]} \\
ta & \hspace{1em} \text{ka} \hspace{1em} \text{(x=2)} \\
& \hspace{1em} \text{tom} \hspace{1em} \text{[y=2]} \\
ta & \hspace{1em} \text{ka} \hspace{1em} \text{(x=2)}
\end{align*}
\]

However, in the context of the kōrvaī proper, the function of the section can be seen more clearly; by adding the final ‘tom’ to each repetition, he reveals that this is not in fact a kōrvaī, but a weaker cadence used for structural effect.
ltā - di - ta ka di lna
di - ta ka di na
ltā ka di na
ta ka
tom l-
ta ka
tom-
ta ka {ltom - - - - -}{35}

ltā - di - ta ka di lna
di - ta ka di na
llta ka di na
ta ka
tom l-
ta ka
tom-
ta ka {ltom - - - - -}{35}

ltā - di - ta ka di lna
di - ta ka di na
ltā ka di na
ta ka
tom l-
ta ka
tom-
ta ka {ltom - - - - -}{35}
mōrā

lta di ki ŭa tom
   ta di lki ŭa tom
   ta di ki ŭa ltom (x₁=15), [y=0]

   ta - di - ki ŭa ltom
   ta - di - ki ŭa ltom
   ta - di - ki ŭa ltom (x₂=21), [y=0]

   ta - di - ki - lţa - tom
   ta - di - lki - ŭa - tom
   ta - lldi - ki - ŭa - tom (x₃=27)

The cadential effect of the introductory section could have been maintained, or even heightened, by leaving the final ‘tom’ off the last repetition, as follows:
ta - di - ta ka di na
di - ta ka di na
ta ka di na
ta ka
tom -
ta ka
tom -
ta ka (x=28)
{tom - - - - -} [y=7]	a - di - ta ka di na
di - ta ka di na
ta ka di na
ta ka
tom -
ta ka
tom -
ta ka (x=28)
{tom - - - - -} [y=7]
ta - di - ta ka di na
di - ta ka di na
ta ka di na
ta ka
tom -
ta ka
tom -
ta ka (x=28)

However, he has chosen to create three completely equal statements; while the cadential effect of the section is weakened, the resulting körvaí is quite symmetrical; the introductory section comprises three groups of five sevens each, while the mōrā is based on three groups of three sevens each. The groupings within the mōrā, 5-5-5, 7-7-7, 9-9-9, serve two functions. First, by distributing the phrases in this way, Mani has generated an interesting tension
with the seven-pulse beat; none of the figures will coincide with a mātra until the last one resolves.

\[\text{lta di ki } \text{ta tom}\]
\[\text{ta di lkti } \text{ta tom}\]
\[\text{ta di ki } \text{ta ltm}\]
\[\text{ta - di - ki } \text{ta ltm}\]
\[\text{ta - di - ki } \text{ta ltm}\]
\[\text{ta - di - ki } \text{ltta - tom}\]
\[\text{ta - di - lkti - ta - tom}\]
\[\text{ta - ldi - ki - ta - tom } \text{[tam]}\]

Second, by grouping the figures from small to large, he is mirroring the large to small grouping of the introductory section.

\[\text{ta - di - ta ka di na}\]
\[\text{di - ta ka di na}\]
\[\text{ta ka di na}\]

**treatment**

The körvaï is played only once, resolving at the eḍuppu, cycle 98. Once again, Mani has employed a cadential structure (in this case the introductory section of körvaï 4), stated it in its most cadential form, (as a preparatory phrase without the final ‘tom’), and then revealed a new meaning that requires weakening the cadential effect of the original.
Interlude; cycles 98-102 (16:49)

The sound of these cycles is quite different from anything that has come before; the material consists mainly of the following patterns;

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta - din - ta din -} \\
\text{- - din - ta din -} \\
\text{- - din - ta din -} \\
\text{- - din - ta din -} \\
\text{gu gu tam - - gu gu din - - gu gu tam -}
\end{align*}
\]

These are taken quite melodically, as a complement to the strenuous preceding passages. Apparently, Mani intended the section as a kind of homage to Palani Subramania Pillai:

this type Palani used to play. I don’t usually play this type of thing for my concerts. I did it only for your recording; a little of Mani Iyer, a little of Palani—and you know how far that is from my style, and I just wanted to show that.\(^{20}\)

\(^{20}\) vol. 2, p.219
miśra gopucca mōrā; cycles 102-104

This section contains a striking anomaly, and a spectacular recovery from an apparent mistake; the mōrā in question comprises, ideally, a triple repetition of the following ‘x’ figure:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ki} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{di} \quad \text{na} \quad \text{tam} & - & - & (10) \\
& \quad \text{ki} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{di} \quad \text{na} \quad \text{tam} & - & - & (9) \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{di} \quad \text{na} \quad \text{tam} & - & - & (8) \\
& \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{di} \quad \text{na} \quad \text{tam} & - & - & (7) \\
& \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{di} \quad \text{na} \quad \text{tam} & - & - & (6) \\
& \quad \text{di} \quad \text{na} \quad \text{tam} & - & - & (5) \\
& \quad \text{na} \quad \text{tam} & - & - & (4)
\end{align*}
\]

which represents forty-nine pulses altogether (7×7), in alternation with the seven-pulse ‘y’ figure

\[
\text{tam} \quad - \quad - \quad - \quad - \quad -
\]

The mōrā generated by these components would occupy (49)+(7)+(49)+(7)+(49) or 161 pulses, equal to twenty-three mātras, or eleven-and-a-half beats. In order to resolve at an eḻuppu, the first repetition would have to begin on the sixth beat of a cycle. Mani’s first mistake in this section is that he begins on the second half of the sixth beat in cycle 102 (17:29), or one-half beat late. Had he completed the mōrā, he would have resolved on the second beat in cycle 104, rather than at the eḻuppu, one half-beat earlier.
It is worth repeating that while it is considered a very serious error to finish a cadential figure in the wrong place, it is entirely permissible to abort and restart a figure if one realizes that it is about to misfire. It is not really a mistake unless one finishes it.

In this case, Mani seems to realize his mistake during the first half of cycle 103 (17:36), and restarts in the correct place, on the sixth beat (17:40). But the 'x' figure he plays after restarting is not the same as the one with which he began in cycle 102. He leaves out (apparently inadvertently) the fifth stage,

\[ \text{ta di na tam - - (17:41-2)} \]

going directly to the next stage. He is now in serious trouble, for two reasons: first, the orderly perfection of the reduction has been disrupted; and second, he is missing six pulses and, barring divine intervention, will probably have to abort again. The former problem is not solvable; what is gone cannot be reconstructed as such. He is rescued, however, by his presence of mind, and recovers the missing six pulses.

In order to understand how he saves the situation, it is necessary to take another look at the reduction above. The material involved may be analyzed as a two-part phrase,

\[ \text{ta ki ŭa ta ka di na tam - -} \]
which is arranged seven plus three. In the reduction, the seven-pulse first part is reduced one pulse at a time, while the three-pulse second part is left intact. But there is one more potential stage of reduction, in which the first part is reduced beyond one, to zero:

\[
\begin{align*}
ta & \, ki \, ta \, ka \, di \, na \, tam \, - \, - \, (10) \\
ki & \, ta \, ta \, ka \, di \, na \, tam \, - \, - \, (9) \\
ta & \, ta \, ka \, di \, na \, tam \, - \, - \, (8) \\
ta & \, ka \, di \, na \, tam \, - \, - \, (7) \\
\{ta & \, di \, na \, tam \, - \, - \, \}(6) \\
di & \, na \, tam \, - \, - \, (5) \\
na & \, tam \, - \, - \, (4) \\
tam & \, - \, - \, (3)
\end{align*}
\]

It is this potential stage that Mani invokes in order to right himself. But this will only add three pulses, and he needs six. He fulfills this need by adding one pulse each to the last three stages, with the extraordinary result that the reduction holds its original arithmetical structure, even though there is a slight distortion of the shape; thus

\[
\begin{align*}
di & \, na \, tam \, - \, - \, (5) \\
nan & \, tam \, - \, - \, (4) \\
tam & \, - \, - \, (3)
\end{align*}
\]

becomes

\[
\begin{align*}
di & \, na \, tam \, - \, - \, - \, (6) \\
nan & \, tam \, - \, - \, - \, (5) \\
tam & \, - \, - \, - \, (4)
\end{align*}
\]
To emphasize the magnitude of this rescue effort, it will be useful to note that the solution had to be arrived at only after the mistake was detected, and that it was implemented within two pulses after detection. At 47 beats per minute, and fourteen pulses per beat, this means that the mistake was made and an arithmetically satisfactory solution not only devised but employed, in less than two-tenths of a second. He finishes the mōrā with two more ‘x’ figures identical to the rescue version.

Kārvai 5; cycle 109

Cycles 105-111 comprise a series of densely articulated patterns (17:53). The patterns themselves would be nearly impossible to sort out without direct knowledge of Mani’s vocabulary of phrases and fingerings, but the barrage is interspersed with two kārvais. These have certain features in common, and will be analyzed together. The first, kārvai 5 (18:36), is quite small:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{lta ki } & \text{ta ta ka jo } \text{nū \ ltam} - & 10 \\
\text{ta - } & \text{ta ki } \text{ltā ta ka jo } \text{nū \ tam} - & 12 \\
\text{ta - di - } & \text{ta ki } \text{ltā ta ka jo } \text{nū \ tam} - & 14 \\
\text{mōrā} \\
\text{ta di - ki } & \text{ta tom } l- (x=6),[y=1] \\
\text{ta di - } & \text{ki } \text{ta tom } l- (x=6),[y=1] \\
\text{ta di - } & \text{ki } \text{ta tom} (x=6)
\end{align*}
\]

It is four beats long, and played only once.
Körvai 6; cycle 111

The introductory section of körvai 6 (18:49) presents an interesting contrast with that of körvai 5. It is as follows:

\begin{verbatim}
lta ki ṭa ta ka jo Ṉu l{ta -} tam - - {12}
ta ki lta ta ka jo Ṉu {ta - lta -} tam - - {14}
ta ki lta ta ka jo Ṉu {ta - lki - ṭa -} tam - - {16}
\end{verbatim}

In both cases, the first line of the introductory figure may be thought of as a fully-articulated seven-pulse phrase followed by a three-körvai 'tam'. Körvai 6 has the two-pulse figure 'ta' inserted between the two parts.

Also in both cases, the second and third lines increase in duration by adding two and four pulses respectively. The difference is that in körvai 5, the additions are at the beginnings of the lines, before the seven-pulse phrases, whereas in körvai 6, they come as extensions of the two-pulse insertion between the parts of the lines.

The mōrā in körvai 6 is rather unusual in character;
ta - ka - ta - di - ki - ta - tom - (x₁=21)

ta - ka - ta - di - ki - ta - tom -
ta - ka - ta - di - ki - ta - tom - (x₂=28)

ta ka ta di ki ta tom
  ta ka ta di ki ta tom
  ta ka ta di ki ta tom (x₃=21)

This particular mōrā represents a combining of old and new ideas.
According to the older compositional styles of Murthy and Raghu,²¹ the mōrā could easily be represented as a kōrvai in the ‘ta din gi ṇa tom’ form, probably in one of the two following ways;

example 1
  ta - ka - ta - di - ki - ta - tom -
  ta - ka - ta - di - ki - ta - tom -
  ta ka ta di ki ta tom

example 2
  ta - ka - ta - di - ki - ta - tom -
  ta - ka - ta - di - ki - ta - tom -
  ta ka ta di ki ta tom
  ta ka ta di ki ta tom
  ta ka ta di ki ta tom

²¹A casual survey of either solo will provide the reader with numerous examples
Example 1 would be thought of as a mōrā, while example 2 could conceivably function on its own as a kōrvaī in the ‘ta din gi ṇa tom’ form. Either way, the old masters, especially of the Tanjore style, would be brought to mind. On the other hand, if the figure had been represented as follows,

\[
\begin{align*}
ta & \text{ka} \text{ ta} \text{ di} \text{ ki} \text{ ṭa} \text{ tom} \\
ta & \text{ka} \text{ ta} \text{ di} \text{ ki} \text{ ṭa} \text{ tom} \\
ta & \text{ka} \text{ ta} \text{ di} \text{ ki} \text{ ṭa} \text{ tom} \\
ta & \text{ka} \text{ ta} \text{ di} \text{ ki} \text{ ṭa} \text{ tom} \\
ta & \text{ka} \text{ ta} \text{ di} \text{ ki} \text{ ṭa} \text{ tom} \\
ta & \text{ka} \text{ ta} \text{ di} \text{ ki} \text{ ṭa} \text{ tom}
\end{align*}
\]

Mani’s own recent developments would have been called to mind.\textsuperscript{22} He has combined the two in this instance, evoking both the old and new in one composition. Incidentally, he has thereby generated a mōrā in the somewhat rare mṛdaṅga yati configuration, 21-28-21.

\textsuperscript{22}see above, pp.193-195.
After the end of körvai 6, Mani briefly reprises the fully-articulated miśra patterns that characterized the previous section. In cycle 112 he introduces the following figure (19:10):

\[
\text{lt}a - \text{ka di - ku} \ \text{din l-} \ \text{din - ta tam - -}
\]

This replaces the old pattern entirely at the beginning of cycle 113, and leads quite naturally into the körvai, beginning on the eḏuppu, cycle 114:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta - ka din} & \ - \ \text{din} - \ \text{ta tam} - - - [12] \\
\text{ta ka ta} & \ - \ \text{ka din} - \ \text{din} - \ \text{ta tam} - - - [14] \\
\text{ta ka di ku ta} & \ - \ \text{ka din} - \ \text{din} - \ \text{ta tam} - - - [16] \\
\text{mōrā} & \\
\text{ta di ki ūa tom} & \\
\text{ta di ki ūa tom} & \ (x_1=10) \\
\text{tam} & \ - \ \text{tam} - - [y=5] \\
\text{ta di ki ūa tom} & \\
\text{ta di ki ūa tom} & \\
\text{ta di ki ūa tom} & \\
\text{ta di ki ūa tom} & \ (x_2=20) \\
\text{tam} & \ - \ \text{tam} - - [y=5] \\
\text{ta di ki ūa tom} & \\
\text{ta di ki ūa tom} & \\
\text{ta di ki ūa tom} & \\
\text{di - ki ūa tom} & \\
\text{di - ki ūa tom} & \\
\text{di - ki ūa tom} \ (x_3=30)
\end{align*}
\]
structure

The körvai comprises 112 pulses (16×7), divided as 42 pulses (6×7) in the introductory section and 70 pulses (10×7) in the mōrā. The mōrā is another example of the unfolding form that has played such an important role throughout the solo. This time, all the figures in the mōrā, as well as the inherent 'x y x y x' structure, are in some integral relationship with the number 5.

treatment

The körvai is played three times (19:18, 19:27, 19:36)—its powerful cadential effect is largely due to the structure and repetitiveness of the mōrā. The cadential force is powerful enough that one repetition of the körvai would have been enough to delineate a section; the triple repetition lends an air not just of delineation, but of finality. Indeed, he begins the final section of the solo immediately following it.
Ending Section

parans; cycle 117-129

This section seems to be organized into three stages; the first, cycles 117-119 (19:46), is a return to madhyama kāla caturaśra sarvalaghū patterns. These serve as a breather, not only for the listener, but presumably also for the performer. The next stage, cycles 119-121 (20:11), recalls the double-time sarvalaghū patterns preceding the miśra gati section.

In the third stage, Mani begins the section preparatory to the long mōrā. By use of patterns such as (20:37)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ldin} & \quad - \quad \text{r} \quad \text{lk} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{k} \\
\text{din} & \quad - \quad \text{l} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{r} \quad \text{k} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{k} \\
\text{lt} \quad \text{k} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{r} \quad \text{k} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{k} \\
\text{ltom} & \quad - \quad \text{ta} \quad -
\end{align*}
\]

and (20:57)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ltam} \quad \text{k} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{k} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{r} \quad \text{lk} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{k} \\
\text{din} \quad \text{k} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{lt} \quad \text{k} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{r} \quad \text{k} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{k} \\
\text{lt} \quad \text{k} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{r} \quad \text{k} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{k}
\end{align*}
\]

the informed listener is warned that the end of the solo is imminent. The long mōrā itself is set up in cycles 128-9 (21:30), by the introduction of the khaṇḍa jāti figure.
tam - - din t r k t t k t r k t t k {10}

The figure is introduced at the sama of cycle 128 and repeated six times each in caturaśra gati, for seven-and-a-half beats, and khaṇḍa gati, for six beats. Mani continues in khaṇḍa gati until the beginning of the long mōrā in cycle 130.

Long Mōrā and Final Kōrvai; cycles 130-131 (21:50)

The long mōrā itself is unusual; enough so that it was not successfully analyzed until Mani explained it.23 It alternates from one beat to another between tiśra gati and khaṇḍa gati. Since he conceived the long mōrā and final kōrvai as a unit, they will be examined together.

RM: Usually, they play a caturaśra mōrā,24 and sometimes they play a tiśra mōrā,25 sometimes they play a khaṇḍa mōrā. I wanted to play tiśra and khaṇḍa together.

---

23 Vol 2, pp. 222-225
24 E.g. Murthy, Ramabhadran, and Sankaran
25 E.g. Raghu
khaṇḍa
ltan - gu ta ka ldi na ta ki ṭa
tiṣra
lta ka tan - gu ta lka di na ta ki ṭa
khaṇḍa
ltan - gu ta ka ldi na ta ki ṭa
tiṣra
lta ka di na ta ka ldi na tom - -
khaṇḍa
ltan - gu ta ka ldi na ta ki ṭa
tiṣra
lta ka tan - gu ta lka di na ta ki ṭa
khaṇḍa
ltan - gu ta ka ldi na ta ki ṭa
tiṣra
lta ka di na ta ka lldi na tom - -
khaṇḍa
ltan - gu ta ka ldi na ta ki ṭa
tiṣra
lta ka tan - gu ta lka di na ta ki ṭa
khaṇḍa
ltan - gu ta ka ldi na ta ki ṭa
tiṣra
lta ka di na tom - 
lta ka tan - gu ta lka di na ta ki ṭa
lta ka di na tom - 
lta ka tan - gu ta lka di na ta ki ṭa
lta ka di na ta ka ltan - gu
lta ka di na ta ka [tam]

...third time, that ‘tan - gu’ would come on the sama, so I composed the körvai so it started with ‘tan - gu’; that link should be there.
ltan - gu ta ka di lna ta ki ūta ta - l- 
ta ka ta - lka din - tan - gu ltom - - - -
ltu ka tan - gu ta lka di na ta ki ūta ltu - 
ta ka ltu - ka din - tan l- gu tom - - l- 
ta ka di ku ltan - gu ta ka di lna ta ki ūta ta - l- 
ta ka ta - lka din - tan - gu ltom - - - -
ltu - - - - l- - di - - - l- - - 
ta ki īta ta di ki ūta tom

ltu - - - - l- - di - - - l- - - 
ta ki īta ta di ki ūta tom
ltu ki ūta ta di ki īta tom
ta - - l- - - di - l- - - -
ltu ki ūta ta di ki īta tom
ta ki ūta ta ldi ki ūta tom
ta ki īta ta di ki ūta tom

when you play the three times, three varieties; second time,

ltu - ta tom - l- ta ta - ta lTom - -
ta ki īta ta di ki ūta tom

ltu - ta tom - l- ta ta - ta lTom - -
ta ki īta ta di ki ūta tom
ltu ki ūta ta di ki īta tom
ta - ta lTom - ta ta - l- ta tom - -
ltu ki ūta ta di ki īta tom
ta ki ūta ta ldi ki ūta tom
ta ki īta ta di ki ūta tom

third time,
The ending körvai (22:08) is exactly symmetrical, in that the introductory
section and the môrâ are the same duration, viz. 96 pulses. The resulting
structure is quite large; 192 pulses in all, or two full cycles in tiśra gati.

The symmetry and triple repetition of the large final körvai underline the
extremely unusual nature of the long môrâ, as well as its comparatively weak
cadential effect. This weakness of effect is traceable to two main causes; the
alternation of tiśra and khaṇḍa gatis, and the deliberate elision of the beginning
of the final körvai with the end of the long môrâ.

Ordinarily, the alternation of gatis would not in itself weaken the force of a
composition, but in this case, the subdivisional change, from 10 pulses per beat
to 12 pulses per beat is not only difficult to control on the part of the performer, but nearly impossible to hear, especially in beat-to-beat alternation, on the part of the listener. As pointed out in the Introduction, it is the *purpose* of the long mōrā to signal unmistakably the end of the solo. The use of this particular long mōrā is a signal that the context in this case was unusual; the singer, with whom Mani performed frequently, may even have recognized this composition. In addition the audience, composed mainly of serious musicians and Mani's own students, was not typical. Mani would probably not use this long mōrā in an ordinary concert.
RAGHU ANALYSIS

TOTAL CYCLES: 172
TOTAL TIME: 25'22"
AVERAGE BPM: 54
FIRST MINUTE: 48
LAST MINUTE: 55

Vilamba Kāla: cycles 1-28

mṛdaṅgam:

sarvalaghu, cycles 1-9

Raghu's opening sarvalaghu is based on the archetype

\[ \text{ta - din - din - na -} \]

but in an extremely sparse version. Each half-cycle group begins with a
statement using three of the four syllables (A); this is followed by beats in which
only one syllable is articulated (B), and the group is ended with a three-pulse
figure (C) that will become the 'x' figure in the first mōrā.

A. l(din - din - l(-) - tam -
B. l(-) - (-) - l(-) - tam -
B. l(-) - (-) - l(-) - tam -
C. l(-) - (-) - l(-) tom tom ta
The pattern is reduced to two-beat groups by omitting both 'B' figures in cycle 3; it is further reduced, again from the middle, by omitting the second half of 'A' and the first half of 'C', resulting in the figure

\[ \text{ldin} - \text{din} - l(-) \text{tom} \text{ tom} \text{ ta} \]

The first half of this figure is dropped in the second half of cycle 4, setting up the small mōrā that ends this section (00:30). The mōrā can be looked at in at least two ways:

Analysis 1

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{tam} & \text{ - tom tom ta} - (x=5) [y=1] \\
\text{tam} & \text{ - tom} \text{ tom ta} - (x=5) [y=1] \\
\text{tam} & \text{ - tom tom ta} (x=5)
\end{align*}
\]

Analysis 2

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{tom} \text{ tom ta} (x=3) \\
\quad - \text{ tam} \quad [y=3] \\
\text{tom} \text{ tom ta} (x=3) \\
\quad - \text{ tam} \quad [y=3] \\
\text{tom} \text{ tom ta} (x=3)
\end{align*}
\]

There is no way to be certain that one of these approaches is superior. Analysis 2 requires that the 'y' figure be conceived as beginning with an unarticulated pulse; generally, if there is to be articulation in a 'y' figure, at least the initial
pulse will be sounded. Alternately, if the first pulse in a ‘y’ figure is unsounded, it is usual for the entire ‘y’ to be so.

Even though Analysis 1 appears to conform with the usual structure of a mōrā, the sound of this small cadence leads to the conclusion that the second analysis is more appropriate. It must be pointed out, however, that no direct access is claimed to Raghu’s intent.

Kōrvai 1, cycles 10-16

preparation

The kōrvai is prepared by a three-cycle section (00:53-1:20) in which the beginning of each half-cycle is the following figure;

.ltam - - ta l- - din - l- din - lna - - -

This figure seems to call to mind the phrase

.ltam - - - lta ka din - ldin - din - lna - - - 1

1See also Ramabhadran, cycles 4-9, Murthy, cycles 4-6, and especially Sankaran, cycles 21-27
The half-cycle groups end with statements of the introductory lines of the körvai; first, at the ends of both halves of cycle 7 and again in cycle 8 (00:55-1:04),

\[
\text{ltam} - - \text{ta} \quad \text{lt-} \quad \text{din} - \quad \text{l-} \quad \text{din} - \quad \text{lna} - - - \\
\text{l-} - - \{\text{ta} \quad \text{l-} \quad \text{di} - \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ldi} - \quad \text{ki} - \quad \text{lṭa} - \quad \text{tom} - \}
\]

In cycles 8 and 9, the reduced versions below are used to end half-cycles (1:09, 1:14):

\[
\{\text{ta} - \text{di} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{di} - \quad \text{ki} - \quad \text{ṭa} - \quad \text{tom} - \}
\{\text{ta} - \text{ta} \quad \text{di} - \quad \text{ki} - \quad \text{ṭa} - \quad \text{tom} - \}
\{\text{ta} \quad \text{di} - \quad \text{ki} - \quad \text{ṭa} - \quad \text{tom} - \}
\]

**structure**

The körvai has three sections; a five-stage gopucca introduction followed by a 'bridge' section in the trikāla ‘ta din gi ṇa tom’ form; the last line of the trikāla serves a double function as the first line of the compound srotovaha mōrā. The whole may be notated as follows:
section 1
 ta - di - ta di - ki - ŭa - tom - ta - - - (17)
 ta - di ta di - ki - ŭa - tom - ta - - - (16)
 ta - ta di - ki - ŭa - tom - ta - - - (15)
 ta ta di - ki - ŭa - tom - ta - - - (14)
 ta di - ki - ŭa - tom - ta - - - (13)

section 2
 ta - - - di - - - ki - - - ŭa - - - tom - - - (20)
 ta - di - ki - ŭa - tom - (10)

mōrā
 ta di ki ŭa tom
 ta di ki ŭa tom
 ta di ki ŭa tom (x₁=15)
   ta - - tom - - [y=6]
 ta di - ki ŭa - tom
 ta di - ki ŭa - tom
 ta di - ki ŭa - tom (x₂=21)
   ta - - tom - - [y=6]
 ta di - - ki ŭa - - tom
 ta di - - ki ŭa - - tom
 ta di - - ki ŭa - - tom (x₃=27)

Several aspects of this kōrvaī are worth detailed attention. First, it represents a symmetrical damaru yati form, wherein the three sections occupy 75, 30, and 75 pulses respectively. The phrases in the introductory section reduce in duration by one-syllable increments, as if the ‘ta - di - ’ prefix were being drawn into the subsequent phrase one pulse at a time. Second, its total duration of 180 pulses makes it possible to think of within four of the five jāti/gatis; caturaśra (4*45), tiśra (6*30), khaṇḍa (5*36), and Śāṅkīrṇa (9*20).
Perhaps its most arresting feature, apart from its size and arithmetical symmetry and versatility, is the complexity of its cadential structure. This körvai could legitimately have ended in several places. One possibility is

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta - di - ta di - ki - ūa - tom - ta - - - (17)} \\
\text{ta - di ta di - ki - ūa - tom - ta - - - (16)} \\
\text{ta - ta di - ki - ūa - tom - ta - - - (15)} \\
\text{ta ta di - ki - ūa - tom - ta - - - (14)} \\
\text{ta di - ki - ūa - tom - ta - - - (13)} \\
\end{align*}
\]

mōrā
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta - - - di - - - ki - - - ūa - - - tom - - - (x₁=20) [y=0]} \\
\text{ta - di - ki - ūa - tom - (x₂=10) [y=0]} \\
\text{ta di ki ūa tom (x₃=5)} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Another possibility, slightly more complex;

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta - di - ta di - ki - ūa - tom - ta - - - (17)} \\
\text{ta - di ta di - ki - ūa - tom - ta - - - (16)} \\
\text{ta - ta di - ki - ūa - tom - ta - - - (15)} \\
\text{ta ta di - ki - ūa - tom - ta - - - (14)} \\
\text{ta di - ki - ūa - tom - ta - - - (13)} \\
\end{align*}
\]

mōrā
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta - - - di - - - ki - - - ūa - - - tom - - -} \\
\text{ta - di - ki - ūa - tom -} \\
\text{ta di ki ūa tom} \\
\text{ta di ki ūa tom} \\
\text{ta di ki ūa tom} \\
\end{align*}
\]

A third possibility would take the ‘ta din gi ūa tom’ form, leaving out the first section entirely:
The examples are provided to demonstrate the enfolded cadential structure of this composition. One of the hallmarks of a truly profound körvali is its generative power; the degree to which it rewards contemplation with new ideas.

One more feature of Raghu’s composition demands attention. The experienced listener is familiar with the five-pulse cadential phrase
‘ta di ki ṭa toṁ’ and with the conventions of its expansion into six, seven, eight and nine-pulse phrases as follows:

\begin{align*}
\text{ta di - ki ṭa toṁ} & \quad (6) \\
\text{ta - di - ki ṭa toṁ} & \quad (7) \\
\text{ta di - ki - ṭa - toṁ} & \quad (8) \\
\text{ta - di - ki - ṭa - toṁ} & \quad (9)
\end{align*}

These derivative phrases have been used in the same forms for long enough that Karṇāṭak musicians recognize them immediately as embodying their respective numeric values. One of Raghu’s specific contributions has been to employ different versions of them, particularly those comprising seven and nine pulses. For example,

\begin{align*}
\text{ta - di - ki ṭa toṁ} & \quad (7) \\
\text{becomes} & \\
\text{ta di - ki ṭa - toṁ} & \quad (7) \\
\text{and} & \\
\text{ta - di - ki - ṭa - toṁ} & \quad (9) \\
\text{becomes}
\end{align*}
ta di - - ki ṭa - - tom (9)

He uses both varieties of each phrase, as will be pointed out below.

treatment

The kōrvai is played three times; first in caturaśra gati (1:22-22½ beats), next in khaṇḍa (1:47-18 beats), and finally in tiśra (2:08-15 beats), as shown in the following three diagrams.
repetition one-caturaśra gati

lta - di - lta di - ki l- ŭa - tom l- ta - - l- {17}
ta - di lta di - ki l- ŭa - tom l- ta - - l- {16}
ta - ta ldi - ki - lţa - tom - lta - - - {15}
lta ta di - lki - ŭa - lltom - ta - l- - {14}
ta di l- ki - ŭa l- tom - ta l- - - {13}

ta l- - - di l- - - ki l- - - ŭa l- - - tom l- - - {20}
ta l- di - ki l- ŭa - tom l- {10}

ta di ki lţa tom

\[ x_1 = 15 \]

\[ y = 6 \]

\[ x_2 = 21 \]

\[ y = 6 \]

\[ x_3 = 27 \]
repetition two-khaṇḍa gati

\[ \text{ltā - di - ta lldi - ki - tā l- tom - ta - l- - } \{17\} \]
\[ \text{ta - di lltā di - ki - lṭa - tom - ta l- - - } \{16\} \]
\[ \text{ta - lltā di - ki - lṭa - tom - ta l- - - } \{15\} \]
\[ \text{ta ta lldi - ki - tā l- tom - ta - l- - } \{14\} \]
\[ \text{ta di - lki - tā - tom l- ta - - - } \{13\} \]

\[ \text{ltā - - - di l- - ki - ll- - tā - - l- tom - - - } \{20\} \]
\[ \text{ltā - di - ki l- - tā - tom - } \{10\} \]

\[ \text{ltā di ki tā tom} \]
\[ \text{ltā di ki tā tom} \]
\[ \text{ltā di ki tā tom (x₁=15)} \]
\[ \text{ltā - - tom - l- [y=6]} \]
\[ \text{ta di - ki lṭa - tom} \]
\[ \text{ta di l- ki tā - tom} \]
\[ \text{ltā di - ki tā l- tom (x₂=21)} \]
\[ \text{ta - - ltom - - [y=6]} \]
\[ \text{ta di l- - ki tā - l- tom} \]
\[ \text{ta di - ll- ki tā - - ltom} \]
\[ \text{ta di - - lki tā - - tom (x₃=27)} \]
repetition three-tišra gati

lta - di - ta di l- ki - ṭa - tom l- ta - - - {17}
ta l- di ta di - ki l- ṭa - tom - ta l- - - {16}
ta - ta ḍdi - ki - ṭa - ltom - ta - - - {15}
lta ta di - ki - lṭa - tom - ta - l- - {14}
ta di - ki l- ṭa - tom - ta l- - - {13}

32 - ll- di - - - ki l- - - ṭa - - l- tom - - - {20}
ta l- di - ki - ṭa l- tom - {10}

ta di ki lṭa tom

ta di ki ṭa ltom

ta di ki ṭa tom (x₁=15)
lṭa - - tom - - [y=6]
lṭa di - ki ṭa - ltom

ta di - ki ṭa l- tom
ta di - ki lṭa - tom (x₂=21)
ta - - ltom - - [y=6]
ta di - l- ki ṭa - - tom
lṭa di - - ki ṭa l- - tom
ta di - ll- ki ṭa - - tom (x₃=27)

The execution of this composition presents certain difficulties:

RR: ...I haven't played that sort of thing in concerts very often.

DN: Why not?

RR: There hasn't been a reason to. It's a matter of the atmosphere—doing all that complicated stuff, people should be able to realize what it is, and appreciate it. On that day there were many musicians, and I felt they would enjoy it. The level of strain, both for the performer and for the tāla keeper, and also for the listener—it should be of some value; it should not go to waste. (laughs)
There are different types of audience; some get carried away by the sound—easy, simple stuff, sarvalaghu. Some want this complicated stuff. That’s where this application is very, very important. My teacher—would do the exact thing he should do at the right moment, the right proportion, to the right people—great man. He’d do something on the spot that hadn’t struck your mind, but it would have great effect. The right application. According to me, you may have learned so many things, you may have so much, but the right thing to apply at the right time—that’s where you score.

That’s why I haven’t played that sort of thing often. Skipping from khanḍa to tiṣra, it’s just one mātra; you have to be very careful there. See, from caturaśram to tiṣram or from caturaśram to khanḍam you can go easily, but from khanḍam to tiṣram you have to be very careful with this complicated stuff. Unless you are so sure about it, you are likely to miss it.

And also, I have composed this; I know what I am doing, but the tāḷa-keeping artist will find it very difficult—very difficult. So even if he goes fast or slow, I have to just jump with him, or drag with him and come at the exact spot. For that you need a lot of lākṣya—see, in our system one person is keeping tāḷa, another person is playing; two minds. If you’re keeping tāḷa and you’re reciting something, it’s okay. You can keep the tāḷa according to the way it’s proceeding. But if somebody else is keeping tāḷa, for two minds to come together, if you’re playing these complicated things, is something really difficult.

So if you play things like this, you have to be very sure, and very careful, and even if you miss, you have to be able to catch it. ²

Having successfully negotiated all the difficulties noted above, Raghu finishes his first turn with a caturaśra jāti arudi in tiṣra gati (2:28);

²vol.2, p.238
In general, the arudi ending a section will be of the half-cycle variety. Raghu has used a longer cadence here, probably to offset the size and complexity of kőrvai 1.

**gațam (2:35)**

**Kőrvai 2, cycles 24-28**

**preparation**

After several cycles of sarvalaghu based on

**ta - din - din - na -**

Suresh introduces his kőrvai’s introductory phrase

**ta ta - ki - ța -**

**ta ka - din - ta -**
at the end of cycle 23 (3:25).

structure (3:30)

It appears that Suresh has deliberately chosen a kōrvai that reflects the three-gati treatment used by Raghu in kōrvai 1. In this case, however, the three gatis are incorporated within each repetition of the composition. In notation:

caturaśra-3:36
lta di - ki l- ṭa - ta ḷka - din - lta - tam - l- (17)
ta di ki ḷta tom
ta di ḷki ṭa tom
ta ldi ki ṭa tom (15)

khaṇḍa-3:41
lta - ta di - ḷki - ṭa - ta ḷka - din - ta - 'tam - (19)
ta l- di - ki ṭa lтом
ta - di - ḷki ṭa tom
ta - ldi - ki ṭa tom (21)

tiśra-3:45
lta - ḷka - ta di l- ki - ṭa - ta ḷka - din - ta - lтam - (21)
ta - di l- ki - ṭa - tom
lta - di - ki - ḷta - tom
ta - di l- ki - ṭa - tom (27)

Each section of the kōrvai occupies four full beats (eight mātras), and consists of two sections; an introductory line and an apparent mōrā. An interesting aspect of the relationship of beat to subdivision is revealed here. In caturaśra gati, four beats will require thirty-two pulses; in khaṇḍa gati, forty
pulses, and in tiśra, forty-eight. In other words, eight pulses must be added to the pattern at each stage in order that four beats will still be filled up in each new subdivision. The required increases are provided by adding two pulses to the introductory line in each section, and then also to each apparent ‘x’ figure in the cadential figure.

It should be noted that a different compositional orientation is at work in körvai 2 from that which was observed in körvai 1, in that the former was conceived as a whole design. The sum of its pulses, 180, results in the ability to perform the composition in a variety of subdivisional settings, but it is clear from Raghu’s comments above that no attempt was made to accommodate ease in tālā-keeping.

By contrast, körvai 2 is clearly designed with the hand gestures in mind, and seems to be in the style of Mani. It may very well represent the first three stages of the composition we discussed in the following exchange:

DN: ...I've heard some of your things that start out, say in caturaśram and go through maybe four stages...

RM: Actually, four, five, six, seven, eight. I took a particular stroke (pattern) and I played for caturaśram, and then make it khaṇḍam, then tiśram, miśram, and caturaśram double. And I come direct (from one to the next)\(^3\)

\(^3\)vol. 2, p.201
Madhyama Kāla: cycles 29-122

mṛdaṅgam (4:22)

sarvalaghu; cycles 29-31

After a brief tiṣra gati arudi to finish Suresh's turn, Raghu uses the next section as a transition from

ta - din - din - na -

to the madhyama-kāla pattern

jo ṇu ta na ta ta din -

Both patterns are used sparingly, however, as they serve only to set up the mōrā series that follows.

mōrā motif; 30-34 (4:30)
Once again he introduces his material in half-cycle groups, ending his

cadences on the sama until the main exposition. The following mōrās end the

second half of cycle 30, and the two half-cycles of cycle 31:

cycle 30
 gi ṇa tom
 gi ṇa tom
 gi ṇa [tom]

cycle 31; first half (4:39)
 di - gi ṇa tom
 di - gi ṇa tom
 di - gi ṇa [tom]

cycle 31; second half (4:43)
 ta - di - gi ṇa tom
 ta - di - gi ṇa tom
 ta - di - gi ṇa [tom]

This motif makes use of a certain degree of illusion, in that the material

employed is treated in a plausible but uncommon way. The powerfully cadential

‘ta - di - gi ṇa tom’, which, as was noted above, has taken on a nearly

morphemic quality within Kānṭāk music, is subjected to an aesthetic distortion

akin to word-play. The usual practice is to use the morphemes of the

‘ta din gi ṇa tom’ family as self-contained ‘x’ figures; for example, the mōrā

under study would usually be rendered as follows:
cycle 30
  gi ŋa tom (x=3) [y=0]
  gi ŋa tom (x=3) [y=0]
  gi ŋa tom [ta] (x=3)

cycle 31; first half
  di - gi ŋa tom (x=5) [y=0]
  di - gi ŋa tom (x=5) [y=0]
  di - gi ŋa tom [ta] (x=5)

cycle 31; second half
  ta - di - gi ŋa tom (x=7) [y=0]
  ta - di - gi ŋa tom (x=7) [y=0]
  ta - di - gi ŋa tom [ta] [(x=7)

Instead, in this series, the final 'tom' in each phrase is treated as a 'y' figure, although this is not perceived until the cadential resolution; for example, the last one;

  ta - di - gi ŋa (x=6)
       tom [y=1]
  ta - di - gi ŋa (x=6)
       tom [y=1]
  ta - di - gi ŋa [tom] (x=6)

The effect on the informed listener is quite startling, not unlike the hearing of a statement such as

  Time flies like an arrow;
  Fruit flies like a banana.
In this case also, a structural rhythm is established by the use of apparently familiar material. The familiarity is revealed as illusory only with the last word, making it necessary for the listener to re-analyze the whole in the light shed by the ending. For Karnāṭak musicians as well as for those versed in word-play, some ideas that began as illusions have entered the vocabulary of common usage. Mani, for example, speaks quite clearly on the subject:

RM:...The other—goes like this

\[
\text{ta - di - ki } \quad \text{ta tom} \\
\text{ta - di - ki } \quad \text{ta tom} \\
\text{ta - di - ki } \quad \text{ta (x_1=20)} \\
\quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \text{tom } - - [y=3] \\
\]

\[
\text{ta di ki } \quad \text{ta tom} \\
\text{ta di ki } \quad \text{ta tom} \\
\text{ta di ki } \quad \text{ta (x_2=14)} \\
\quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \text{tom } - - [y=3] \\
\]

\[
\text{ki } \quad \text{ta tom} \\
\text{ki } \quad \text{ta tom} \\
\text{ki } \quad \text{ta (x_3=8) [tom]} \\
\]

the usual thing is for it to end

\[
\text{ki } \quad \text{ta tom} \\
\text{ki } \quad \text{ta tom} \\
\text{ki } \quad \text{ta tom [ta]} \\
\]

this ends
ki شاشة tom
ki شاشة tom
ki شاشة [tom]²

In Raghu’s case, given that he has prepared the way for the full cadential expression of this idea in cycles 32-34 (4:51-5:00), it would be reasonable to expect his initial mōrā to follow this form, and to total forty-eight pulses. But he is not finished with his surprises; he plays it straight:

ki شاشة tom
ki شاشة tom
ki شاشة tom  -  (x₁=9) [y=2]

ta - ki شاشة tom
ta - ki شاشة tom
ta - ki شاشة tom  -  (x₂=15) [y=2]

ta - di - ki شاشة tom
ta - di - ki شاشة tom
ta - di - ki شاشة tom (x₃=21) [ta]

Raghu plays two more variations on this theme, both in cycle 33. First,
ta - di - ki ta tom
ta - di - ki ta tom
ta - di - ki ta tom - - (x=21) [y=2]]

ta - ki ta tom
ta - ki ta tom
ta - ki ta tom - - (x=15) [y=2]

ki ta tom
ki ta tom
ki ta tom (x=9) [ta]

and then

ki ta tom
ta - ki ta tom
ta - di - ki ta tom - - (x=15) [y=2]

as has been pointed out above, the forty-eight pulse 'surprise' version of this idea has entered the main current of mṛdaṅgam composition, probably because it combines the element of surprise with relative ease of execution and applicability. At forty-eight pulses, it fits conveniently in caturaśra (4*12) and tiṣra (6*8) jāti/gati situations. Raghu's final subversion of the listener's expectations in this section is to play the forty-nine pulse version in tiṣra gati at
the end of cycle 34 (5:08). This requires that he change subdivisions inwardly in the preceding half-beat, since the mūrā must begin one pulse before the middle of beat five in order to resolve properly at the cḍaṇṇu in cycle 35.\(^5\)

**sarvalaghu; cycles 35-38 (5:13-5:37)**

Cycles 35 and 36 represent a rarity in this solo, a brief section in which Raghu is not setting up a particular idea. The main sarvalaghu pattern is

\[\text{ltā jo ṇu ta ṇa ta jo ṇu ltā ṇa ta jo ṇu tam k t t k}\]

The interlude is brief; by cycles 37 and 38 he is already introducing the figure that will be the basis first for the miśra motif explored in cycles 39-41, and then for kōrvai 3. The figure is

\[\text{ta ta - ki - ta - ta ka - dīn - ta -}\]

---

\(^5\)For a more detailed discussion of inward (unarticulated) subdivision changes, see Murthy Analysis, kōrvai 2.
miśra motif; cycles 39-41 (5:49-6:15)

Cycles 39, 40, and 41 all have the same basic form; the first beat is silent, after which the following seven beats are divided into four segments, each of which comprises fourteen pulses. In all three cycles, the last segment of fourteen is identical to the figure notated above. The other three segments are composed of increasingly dense elaborations of seven-stroke patterns that serve as a contrast with the relative sparseness of articulation within the körvai to come.

Körvai 3, cycles 42-46

preparation

The körvai begins immediately after the motif outlined above.

structure

This körvai is even larger in structure than körvai 1, consisting of 192 pulses, and there are some similarities of form with the earlier composition. These include a three-part structure composed of an initial section that expresses some notions about pure design, a second, quasi-cadential ‘bridge’ section that represents an orderly reduction of the ‘ta  din gi ṇa tom’ type, though not this time in the trikāla form, and a compound mōrā that seems to
flow naturally from the second section. It also shares the characteristic of being arithmetically applicable to more than one jāti/gati; in this case caturaśra (8*24) and tiśra (6*32). The notation follows:

section 1

lt̄a di - ta l- ki ṭa
ta l̄ka - din - l̄ta - {14}
   ta - l- tam - -
   l̄ta - - tam l- -
   ta - l- tam - - {18}

lt̄a ka ta di l- ta - ki l̄ta
ta ka - l̄din - ta - {16}
   l̄ta - tam - l-
   ta - tam l- -
   ta - l̄ltam - - {15}

ta l̄ka di ku ta l̄di - ta - l̄ki ṭa
ta ka l- din - ta l- {18}
   ta tam - l-
   ta tam - l-
   ta tam - l- {12}

section 2

ta - - l̄di - - ki l- - ṭa - l- tom - - {15}
   l̄ta - di - l̄ki - ṭa - l̄tom - {10}
môrâ

ta di ḫi ṭa lom
ta ḫldi ki ṭa lom
lta di ṭa lom \((x_1=15)\)
  ta - ta l- -
  lom - lom - - \([y=10]\)
t k lta di ṭa lom
t k ta di ḫi ṭa lom
t k lta di ṭa lom \((x_2=18)\)
  ta - ta l- -
  lom - lom - - \([y=10]\)
t k ḫld k ta di ḫi ṭa lom
t k ḫ k lta di ṭa lom
t k ḫ k ta ḫldi ki ṭa lom \((x_3=21)\)

The introductory section is made up of three two-part lines; each line begins with a single statement of the fourteen-pulse phrase that was the subject of motivic development above,

\[
\begin{align*}
  \text{ta di} & \quad \text{ta} - \quad \text{ki} \quad \text{ṭa} \\
  \text{ta ka} & \quad \text{din} - \quad \text{ṭa} \\
\end{align*}
\]

In the second and third lines, this phrase is prefixed with two and four pulses respectively. The second part of each line has a quasi-cadential form, in that it contains a triple repetition of a figure that could, under other circumstances, function as a môrâ. In contrast with the extension of the first part in the second and third statements, the second part of the line actually diminishes by three pulses each time. As can be seen above, the first part
expands from fourteen to sixteen and then to eighteen, while the second part diminishes from eighteen to fifteen to twelve pulses. The result is that the lines diminish one pulse at a time, from thirty-two, to thirty-one, and finally to thirty pulses. The shape and proportion of each line changes much more than its actual duration because of this simultaneous expansion and contraction.

The second and third sections in körvai 3, are nearly identical in form and behavior to those in körvai 1, although the arithmetical totals are slightly different.

**treatment**

It is in the treatment of the composition that something unusual takes place. He plays it, apparently, twice; once each in caturaśra and tiśra gati, which would violate the axiom that a körvai may be played once or three times, but never twice. The answer lies in the ability to imagine it as being played once and once, rather than twice.

DN: ...you said that the way you think of it, is not that you did it twice, but that you did it once each.

RR: Yes. Because whether you play in caturaśram or in tiśram, if you start on sama, it will end on sama. It is a three-cycle körvai. So it's enough if you play it once each.

DN: Because it's so long?
RR: Because it's so long, and because it ends on sama. There are some kōrvaśis which you have to play twice this way and once that way, in order to arrive at sama. There is no need for that here. If you want to, you can repeat it, but it's just repetition for repetition's sake. Even if you play it once it's okay.

DN: And once in each kāla is also okay...

RR: Yes.\(^7\)

As if to emphasize the power of once and once, Raghu's tiśra gati arudi to the middle of cycle 47 is as follows (7:01):

\[
\text{ltə - ka - di - lmi - ta - ka - ljo - nũ - ta ka ldi mi ta ka jo nũ [tam]}\]

\(^7\text{vol.2, p.245; see also vol.2, p.201, for Mani's comments.}\)
gaṭam (7:03)

miśra motif; cycles 49-52 (7:19-54)

Körvai 4, cycles 53-57 (7:55-8:20)

Suresh plays the same miśra motif and körvai in his turn, as nearly verbatim as possible. The unavoidable impression is that he has been taught all this by Raghu, rather than that he absorbed it while Raghu played and was able to repeat it after one hearing.

mṛdaṅgam

sarvalaghu; cycles 58-62 (8:42)

The patterns in this section serve two purposes; first, they give the listener a well-deserved opportunity to listen to the precision and beauty of Raghu's sarvalaghu and gumiki. Also, they set the stage for the change to khaṇḍa gati in cycle 63.

Cycles 58-60 concentrate mainly on the pattern

\[ l\text{din} - ta \, n\text{a} \, l\text{ta} \, t\text{a} \, j\text{o} \, n\text{u} \, l\text{ta} \, n\text{a} \, t\text{a} \, j\text{o} \, l\text{hu} \, t\text{am} \, k\text{t} \, t \, k \]

while cycles 61-62 begin the transition to
that will provide the bridge to khanḍam.

transition to khanḍa gati; cycles 63-68 (9:21-10:13)

Raghu's transition to khanḍa gati follows the style of Palani Subramania Pillai, who apparently introduced the device of alternating the origin and destination gatis one beat or group of beats at a time, by use of a similar sarvalaghu phrase;\(^8\) in this case, the eight-pulse phrase

\[ \text{l} \text{din} - \text{tan t r l} \text{g \ d ta} \text{ din} - \]

is alternated with its ten-pulse version

\[ \text{l} \text{din} - \text{tan t r g \ d lta} \text{ din - tam} - \]

These are alternated, one beat at a time, through the end of cycle 64. In cycles 65 and 66, the two gatis are alternated in half-cycle groups; before the complete change to khanḍa gati in the second half of cycle 68, Raghu alternates them

---

\(^8\)For another example of this device, probably closer to Palani Subramania Pillai's own, see Sankaran, cycles 47ff. It is discussed in Mani Interview 1; vol.2, p. 213, as an inspiration to his composition style.
two beats at a time, then returns to the original one-beat alternation. Once the change to khaṇḍa is complete, the full sarvalaghu pattern,

ljo Ṽu tan t r g ḍ lta jo Ṽu ta na

is used until cycle 69

**tiśra motif, cycles 69-75**

Having established the sarvalaghu pattern above as the whole-beat flow pattern for this section, Raghu immediately sets about breaking it into smaller parts. For the first seven beats of cycle 69, he uses the first half of it,

ljo Ṽu tan t r g ḍ l

so that each repetition of the pattern coincides with a mātra. Starting with beat 8 (10:24), he breaks it down even further, dropping the initial ‘jo Ṽu’. The resulting phrase, ‘tan t r g ḍ’, is three pulses long, and is repeated five times, resolving at the eḷuppu of cycle 70 (10:35). This repeated pattern with an eḷuppu resolution has a strong cadential effect, but is not a mōrā. It functions rather as a motif that mirrors the structure of the tāla at this point. In khaṇḍa gati, each beat of the tāla is ten pulses in duration. From beat 8, where the pattern begins, to the eḷuppu, where it ends, are three half-beats, or fifteen pulses altogether. The mātras reveal three fives; the played material reveals five threes. The device is
similar to that used in cycles 39-41 above, in which phrases of seven pulses were played in groups of three-and-a-half beats.

The motif is played more frequently in cycle 71 (10:40); once in the first half, resolving to the middle of beat five, and twice in the second half, resolving first to the middle of beat seven, and then to the cḍuppu of cycle 72 (10:46). Throughout the section, motifs are resolved to half-beats, as if the entire accent structure of ādi tāla were shifted with the cḍuppu.⁹

In cycle 72, Raghu returns to the pattern he fragmented in order to generate the motif, and, as if to acknowledge an effect of the fragmentation, he doubles each of the parts:

\[ \text{jo ṇu tan } t \ r \ g \ ḍ \]

now becomes

\[ \text{ljo ṇu jo ṇu tan } lt \ r \ g \ ḍ \ tan t r g \ ḍ \ l \]

which is alternated with the figure

\[ \text{lnan g } ḍ \ t \ r \ g \ ḍ \ tom } \text{ lta } - \text{ tom } - - \]

---

⁹This is not a demand generated by the cḍuppu, but rather a possibility, as can be seen in cycles 30-32 above, and in numerous other examples throughout the five solos.
Cycles 74 and 75 (11:06) involve a shifting of the first half of the above figure that is accomplished by diminishing the spaces following the syllables ‘ta’ and ‘tom’ in the second half. The figure ‘năn g ķ t r g ķ tom’, repeated three times from beat 8 in cycle 75, resolves at the eqūppu of cycle 76 to end the section.

khaṇḍa sarvalaghū; cycles 76-86 (11:22)

Cycles 76-82 present an opportunity to listen to the free play of a drummer who is apparently enjoying himself enormously. There is little to mention in this section apart from the writer’s impression that Raghu is ‘letting the drum tell him what to play’.\textsuperscript{10} In fact there is some support for this impression:

I got a new phrase on that day. That

\begin{verbatim}
ta din - gu din - gu nan - gu
ta din - gu din - gu nan - gu
\end{verbatim}

on the spot I got it. Like that you get some new phrase, just catch hold of it, build on it. It doesn’t happen every time; when you get it, just catch hold of it.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{10}I refer here to instructions from T Ranganathan, none of which is written down. If memory serves properly, a fuller expression would go something like this: “You have to reach a stage where you enjoy your own playing. Then the drum will tell you what to do.”

\textsuperscript{11}vol.2, p.247
Körvai 5, cycles 86-88

preparation

Raghu begins the preparation for körvai 5 at the end of the first half of cycle 83 (12:21). He has been developing the new phrase described above; after three repetitions of it in cycle 83 (12:27), he appends the following ten-pulse phrase to it:

\[ ta \; ka - \; ta \; di - \; ki \; ta - \; tom \]

The second half of the cycle ends with the seven-pulse version (12:31)

\[ ta \; ka \; ta \; di \; ki \; ta \; tom \]

In cycle 84 the two are reversed: the first half-cycle ends with the seven-pulse phrase, and the second with its ten-pulse version. Cycles 85 and 86 continue the build-up in quarter-cycle groups: the ten-pulse version is repeated in beat 2, cycle 85, and then expanded to a thirteen-pulse version in the second and third quarter-cycles (12:44):

\[ ta \; ka - - \; ta \; di - - \; ki \; ta - - \; tom \]
The pattern of expansion is now clear; spaces are being added after ‘ka’, ‘di’, and ‘ṭa’, with the effect that the pattern increases by three pulses at each stage. Indeed, the next expansion is to sixteen pulses (12:49).

\[\text{ta ka - - ta di - - ki ṭa - - tom}\]

Such an expansion could go on without limit; Raghu chooses the quarter-cycle as the boundary. The longest expansion is to nineteen pulses, repeated twice, in the second and third quarters of cycle 86:

\[\text{ta ka - - - ta di - - - ki ṭa - - - tom}\]

As this figure expands by three pulses each time, the pattern preceding it must decrease by the same amount. Raghu’s response to this necessity is to choose an antecedent pattern that seems designed specifically for the situation. The antecedent pattern,

\[\text{ta din - gu din - gu nan - gu}\]
is composed of exactly the durational 'chunks' that can be dropped away or added as the ending figure expands or contracts. In the interview section quoted below, each 'chunk' has been highlighted in bold type.\textsuperscript{12}

RR: ...that seven,

\begin{verbatim}
ta ka ta di ki \textbf{ta} tom
\end{verbatim}

I am just spacing it differently

\begin{verbatim}
ta ka ta di ki \textbf{ta} tom
\hspace{2em} ta ka - ta di - \textbf{ki} ta - \textbf{tom}
\hspace{2em} ta ka - - ta di - - ki \textbf{ta} - - \textbf{tom}
\end{verbatim}

and so on, and variations on that.

DN: It's beautiful to make a whole körvai out of one phrase...

RR: Yes. That's why all that initial preparation. Then only that körvai has value. If you just start the körvai

\begin{verbatim}
ta ka - - ta di - - ki \textbf{ta} - - \textbf{tom}
\end{verbatim}

where is the beginning, where is the end? It doesn't have meaning at all. For it to have some significance and meaning you must have some buildup for that.

\textsuperscript{12}The reader is invited to examine a similarly felicitous arrangement of a diminishing antecedent figure setting up an expanding cadential phrase in Mani, cycles 88-92.
like that you have to go on shifting it, and then start the körvai. Then only it has meaning.

DN: ...You have to build it up.
RR: Of course. Build-up is something which is very, very, very, very important.\textsuperscript{13}

Having commented on the perfect suitability of the antecedent pattern for the situation, it is worth pointing out that the putting together of the two was, in this case, unpremeditated. Raghu has claimed above that the antecedent pattern was newly discovered on the spot, and it may well have been its unusual appropriateness that made the discovery a special one. Another feature of the antecedent pattern that may have contributed to its importance to Raghu is its evocation of the archetypal sarvalaghun pattern

\texttt{ta - din - din - na -}

\textbf{structure}

Körvai 5 is in the '\texttt{ta din gi ūa tom}' form; its reduction is entirely orderly, following the same stages as the preparation, except that the longest, nineteen-pulse stage, is omitted.

\begin{verbatim}
  ta ka - - ta di - - - ki ūa - - - tom \{16\}
  ta ka - - ta di - - ki ūa - - tom \{13\}
  ta ka - ta di - ki ūa - tom \{10\}
  ta ka ta di ki ūa tom (x=7) [y=0]
  ta ka ta di ki ūa tom (x=7) [y=0]
  ta ka ta di ki ūa tom (x=7)
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{13}\textit{vol.2, p.247}
The total number of pulses is sixty ($3\times4\times5$), which suggests that körvaï 5 could easily be used in caturaśra and tiśra jāti/gati applications as well as the current khaṇḍa gati use.

**treatment**

The körvaï is played three times (12:58, 13:04, 13:10) with only small variations, all of which take place in the mōrā:

mōrā 1
- ta ka ta di ki ṭa tom (x=7) [y=0]
- ta ka ta di ki ṭa tom (x=7) [y=0]
- ta ka ta di ki ṭa tom (x=7)

mōrā 2
- ta ka nan gḍ t r k ṭ tom (x=7) [y=0]
- ta ka nan gḍ t r k ṭ tom (x=7) [y=0]
- ta ka nan gḍ t r k ṭ tom (x=7)

mōrā 3
- din - - - ki ṭa tom (x=7) [y=0]
- din - - - ki ṭa tom (x=7) [y=0]
- din - - - ki ṭa tom (x=7)

As Rāghu has stated above, the cadential force, or ‘meaning’, of this körvaï is enhanced by its relatively elaborate preparation. In fact this is a somewhat rare case in which the preparation, at three-and-a-half cycles, is considerably longer
than the actual composition, whose three repetitions together comprise two- and-a-quarter cycles.

khāṇḍa sarvalaghū; cycles 89-91 (13:17)

Kōrvai 6, cycles 91-97

preparation

The sarvalaghū in cycles 89-91 is once again based on the new discovery ta din - gu din - gu nan - gu

but mainly serves to set up kōrvai 6. The close proximity to kōrvai 5 is not coincidental; the two share the feature of incremental expansion and contraction of a single phrase. In the case of kōrvai 5, the phrase was the seven-pulse 'ta ka ta di ki ta tom', the expansions and contractions of which are analyzed above. In kōrvai 6, an eight syllable phrase is used, although its first appearance, at the end of cycle 90, is in the fully expanded twenty-pulse form:

lta ta - - ki l- - ta - - lta ka - - din l- - ta - -

In cycle 91, the next stage is used to end the first two quarter-cycles (13:25):
ta ta - ki - ṭa - ta ka - di - ta -

This fourteen-pulse phrase is familiar not only because of its similarity of treatment with körvai 5, but because it has appeared before, as the subject of the miśra motif in cycles 39-41 and as the introductory phrase in körvai 3.

The eight-pulse source phrase,

ta ta ki ṭa ta ka di ta

is used to end beats five and six in cycle 91. On the subject of the similarity of preparation with körvai 5, Raghu said:

RR: Same principle; from eight,

ta di ki ṭa ta ka di na

you get fourteen:

ta di - ki - ṭa - ta ka - di - na -

and then twenty

ta di - - ki - - ṭa - - ta ka - - di - - na - -

twenty fits in well with khanḍam.

DN: (laughs)...you might say that.
RR: So first you take the eight, and then the fourteen, just to get that color, you know, that variation, then go to twenty. Then twenty, fourteen, eight; with that you make the körvai. Then only you get that symmetry, that grace.  

structure

The körvai is in two distinct parts; the introductory section, composed of the three-stage reduction noted above, and the mōrā, which is different in each repetition. Each of the three mōrās totals 58 pulses, and each is in the unfolding form.
repetition 1 - 13:31

lta ta - - ki l- - tā - - lta ka - - din l- - ta - - {20}
lta ta - ki - lṭa - ta ka - lḍin - ta - {14}
ta lṭa ki ṭa ta ka lḍin ta {8}

mōrā 1

ta - - lṭom - ta di ki lṭa tom (x₁=10)
ta - tom l- - [y=5]
t k ta - l- tom - ta di lki ṭa tom (x₂=16)
ta di lki ṭa tom

repetition 2 - 14:07

lta ta - - ki l- - tā - - lta ka - - din l- - ta - - {20}
lta ta - ki - lṭa - ta ka - lḍin - ta - {14}
ta lṭa ki ṭa ta ka lḍin ta {8}

mōrā 2

ta - tom l- ta di ki ṭa lṭom (x₁=9)
ta - tom - l- gu [y=6]
ta - tom l- ta di ki ṭa lṭom (x₂=14)
ta - tom - l- gu [y=6]

303
repetition 3 - 14:23

lta ta - - ki l- - ŭa - - lta ka - - din ll- - ta - - {20}
  lta ta - ki - lta - ta ka - ldin - ta - {14}
    ta lta ki ŭa ta ka ldin ta {8}

mōrā 3
  ta - di l- ki ŭa tom (x₁=7)
    ta l- - - tom - l- - [y=8]
  ta - di l- ki ŭa tom
  ta l- di - ki ŭa lom (x₂=14)
    ta - - - lom - - - [y=8]
  ta l- di - ki ŭa lom
  ta - di - lki ŭa tom
  ta - lldi - ki ŭa tom (x₃=21)

All three mōrās are structurally symmetrical, yet each raises questions about how Raghu arrived at fifty-eight pulses. In the analysis of their respective structures, it may become clear that each of them has been altered from a jāti-specific original in order to reach this unusual total. In fact, the first ‘x’ figure in each case provides the necessary clue.

In the case of mōrā 1,

\[ x₁=\{\text{ta - - tom - ta di ki ŭa tom}\} \]

which is a standard ten-pulse khanḍa cadential figure. Both of the ‘y’ figures and all the expansions at the end of ‘x’ figures are in five-pulse groups. An undisturbed version of this mōrā would have provided fifty-five pulses in a perfectly symmetrical arrangement:
By adding one pulse (t k) to the beginning of ‘x₂’ and two pulses (ta ka) to the beginning of ‘x₃’, Raghu has applied one orderly expansion to another in order to arrive at fifty-eight. The resulting mōrā 1 is thus arrived at by altering a cogent khaṇḍa figure:

\[(10)+[5]+(10+5)+[5]+(10+5+5)=55 (5*11)\]

Mōrā 2 begins with the common sankīra ma figure

\[x₁=\{ta - tom - ta di ki ṭa tom\}\]

This nine-pulse figure also begins the second and third ‘x’ figures, which are then increased by five and ten pulses respectively. When one adds the ‘y’ figures, six pulses each, the following equation emerges:

\[(9)+[6]+(9+5)+[6]+(9+5+5)=54 (9*6)\]

Again, Raghu’s solution results in a more complex, yet still cogent structure. As is examined in some detail in the Mani Analysis, the third ‘x’ in an unfolding mōrā is itself in the mōrā form, and therefore may be said to include ‘y’ figures in its structure. In mōrās 1 and 3, such ‘y’ figures have the value ‘zero’. In mōrā 2, however, they are expanded to two pulses each, as indicated below.
ta - tom - ta di ki ṭa tom (x₁=9)
   ta - tom - - gu [y=6]

   ta - tom - ta di ki ṭa tom
   ta di ki ṭa tom (x₂=14)
   ta - tom - - gu [y=6]

   ta - tom - ta di ki ṭa tom
       [ta - ]
   ta di ki ṭa tom
       [ta - ]
   ta di ki ṭa tom (x₃=23)

The result is a well-formed fifty-eight pulse mōrā arrived at by invoking possibilities of expansion inherent in the original sankīrna jāti idea.

(4+5)+[6]+(4+5+5)+[6]+(4+5+2+5+2+5)=58

Mōrā 3 is the result of a much simpler alteration than the other two, in that no further level of order is introduced (as in mōrā 1) or invoked (as in mōrā 2). A simple seven-pulse figure,

\[ x₁=\{ta - di - ki ṭa tom\} \]

is unfolded in the most straightforward manner possible:
ta - di - ki ūa tom (x₁=7)
ta - - - tom - - - [y=8]
ta - di - ki ūa tom

The transformation here seems to have taken place in the 'y' figures. If they had been seven-pulse figures, the resulting arithmetical symmetry would have been striking:

\[(7)+[7]+(7+7)+[7]+(7+7+7) = 56 \quad (8\times 7)\]

However, each 'y' has been increased by one pulse, resulting in the third fifty-eight pulse mōrā.

\[(7)+[7]+(7+7)+[7]+(7+7+7) = 58\]

treatment

Raghu adopts an unusual tactic in the performance of this kōrvai. As if to emphasize the differences among the three mōrās, the three ten-beat repetitions are not played consecutively, as one might expect. Instead, he plays them one at a time, so that each resolves on an eṇuppu; the first in cycle 93
(13:31), the second, after a false start, in cycle 96 (14:07), and the third, in cycle 98 (14:23). Each repetition is set up by the same antecedent phrase

ta din - gu din - gu nan - gu

According to Raghu, the juxtaposition of phrase with körvai was of aesthetic significance:

DN: Now this one you played in three consecutive cycles, rather than three times back to back.

RR: You can do that, but because it starts in the second drutam, it doesn’t start on sama. It would have to start on the third beat (middle). I felt that if I played it each time coming back to the original phrase, that

ta din - gu din - gu nan - gu

it would have greater effect. So it starts in the same place every time, and then the original phrase, like that. But you can play consecutively; it’s no problem. This way there’s more contrast; the feeling is there.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{14}vol.2, p.247
sarvalaghu and motifs, cycles 98-106 (14:34)

The second half of cycle 98 and all of cycle 99 comprise a motivic reduction/expansion in four stages, each of which has three parts.

Stage 1
lta tom - (3) ta - l- - ki - - l- - ta - - (12) lta di ki ūta tom (5)

Stage 2
lta tom - ta tom l- (6) ta - - lka - - (8) ta ldi - ki ūta tom (6)

Stage 3
lta tom - ta tom l- ta tom - (9) ta l- - - (4) ta - ldi - ki ūta tom (7)

Stage 4
lta tom - ta tom l- ta tom - ta ki ūta (12) ta ki ūta ta di ki ūta tom (8)

In each stage, the initial phrase and the final ‘ta di ki ūta tom’ variation increase in duration. It is not properly a mūrā, although it could be if each stage were stated only once. The double statement of each line lends a motivic effect, rather than the structural/cadential effect of a mūrā. As it turns out, there is an objective involved in this development. Raghu has been setting up a caturāśra motif, which is revealed in the second half of cycle 100 (14:53) by the simple process of changing the four groups of three in stage four above, into three
groups of four. A slight transformation in the eight-pulse figure now yields five
groups of four pulses, as follows:

\[\text{Itam} \quad - \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{lka} \quad \text{jo} \quad \text{nu} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{ljo} \quad \text{nu} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{jo} \quad \text{lnu} \quad \text{tom} \quad \text{- ta} \quad \text{-} \]

In cycle 101 this is transformed further into a familiar caturaśra jāti
sarvalaghū pattern (15:00):

\[\text{Ita} \quad \text{din} \quad - \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ldin} \quad - \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{din} \quad - \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{din} \quad - \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{-} \]

The strong sense of caturaśram evoked by this pattern is not to go unrewarded.
In the first half of cycle 101 Raghu actually changes to caturaśra gati (15:07)

\[\text{Ita} \quad \text{din} \quad - \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{Ita} \quad \text{din} \quad - \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{Ita} \quad \text{din} \quad - \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{Ita} \quad \text{din} \quad - \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{-} \]

and then, briefly, to tiśra (15:12)

\[\text{Ita} \quad \text{din} \quad - \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{din} \quad - \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{din} \quad - \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{Ita} \quad \text{din} \quad - \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{din} \quad - \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{-} \]

before returning to khaṇḍa (15:14), in which he finishes his turn with several
cycles of densely articulated but rhythmically straightforward patterns before
the following spare mōrā (15:44):
gaṇaṁ

khaṇḍa sarvalaghū; cycles 107-117 (16:00-17:28)

Partly out of respect for the amazing display of imagination, control and auditory beauty he has just witnessed, Suresh waits an entire cycle before beginning his sarvalaghū in cycle 108.

16Raghū has just played for nearly seven minutes, well over one quarter of the entire solo, in khaṇḍa gati before surrendering the stage.
Körvai 7, cycle 118 (17:28)

His first khanḍa körvai is played just once, without preparation, and, at 80 pulses, takes one full cycle:

\[
\text{ltu ki ū tā tā kā l- tan - gu} \quad \{9\} \\
\text{tā kī ū tā kā tā lēkā - tan - gu} \quad \{11\} \\
\text{ltu ki ū tā kā lētā kā tā lētā - tan - gu} \quad \{13\} \\
\text{mōrā} \\
\text{tā dī lēkī ū tā tom} \\
\text{tā dī lēkī ū tā tom} \\
\text{tā dī lēkī ū tā tom - (x=15) } [y=1] \\
\]

\[
\text{tā lūdī ū kū ū tā tom} \\
\text{tā lūdī ū kū ū tā tom} \\
\text{tā lūdī ū kū ū tā tom - (x=15) } [y=1] \\
\]

\[
\text{ltu dī ū kū ū tā tom} \\
\text{ltu dī ū kū ū tā tom} \\
\text{ltu dī ū kū ū tā tom (x=15)} \\
\]

Körvai 8, cycles 120-122 (17:44)

This körvai is even more straightforward than the previous one. Once again it is eighty pulses, or one cycle long, but it is performed three times:
di - tan kṭ t k t r k ṭ t k j n t k ta - tam - - (15)
di - tan kṭ t k t r k ṭ t k j n t k ta - tam - - (15)
di - tan kṭ t k t r k ṭ t k j n t k ta - tam - - (15)
mōṛā

Koraippu; cycles 123-159 (18:12)

Up to this point, Raghu and Suresh have played in alternation, each taking as many cycles as he wished before yielding the stage. But the solo must end in unison, and the device known as 'koraippu', or reduction, has evolved as a graceful transition. In a koraippu, the two (or more) drummers trade phrases within progressively diminishing beat-groups until these groups become so small that the step to unison is a short one.

The most common practice is to start with full-cycle groups, although two-cycle groups may also be used; the mṛdaṅgam player's first turn indicates the size of the 'full-cycle' turns. Whenever the mṛdaṅgam player decides that the time has come for the next stage, he will cut his turn in half; if the full-cycle stage was eight beats, each turn in the half-cycle stage will be four. The same procedure is followed at all the stages; the mṛdaṅgam player initiates all the changes.
In terms of thematic material, the koraippu may be tāḷa-derived or jāti-derived. If it is the former, the secondary percussionists are expected to imitate closely the phrases played by the mṛdaṅgam player. If it is the latter, the mṛdaṅgam player will introduce the jāti and the style of treatment he prefers, as will be explained below.

This koraippu is in three sections. The first section, still in khaṇḍa gati, consists of the first three exchanges. In each case, the mṛdaṅgam takes two cycles, and the gaṭam one. The second section comprises a miṣra koraippu, a jāti-derived reduction based on seven, which begins in khaṇḍa gati, changes to caturaśra gati, and ends in tiśra gati. The final section, beginning in cycle 150, drops the miṣra motif. It begins in tiśra gati and changes to caturaśram before the drummers begin playing together in cycle 160.
mṛdaṅgaṃ; cycles 123-4 (18:23)

Raghu begins the first section by playing the following two-cycle reduction:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{lt}a - & \text{ta ki ūta ka} \text{ din - ta} \\
\text{ltom} - & \text{ta - tom} \text{ l- - - - } \\
\text{lt}a \text{ ka} \text{ ta ki ūta ka} \text{ din - ta} \\
\text{ltom} - & \text{ta - tom} \text{ l- - - - } \{40\}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{lt}a - & \text{ta ki ūta ka} \text{ din - ta} \\
\text{ltom} - & \text{ta - } \\
\text{ta} \text{ Ṽka} \text{ ta ki ūta Ṽka din - ta} \\
\text{tom l- ta - } \{28\}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta -} & \text{ lt}a \text{ ki ūta} \text{ ta} \text{ ka l}d\text{in - ta} \\
\text{ta} \text{ ka ūta ki ūta} \text{ ta} \text{ ka l}d\text{in - ta} \{20\}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta -} & \text{ lt}a \text{ ki ūta} \\
\text{ta} \text{ ka ūta} \text{ ki ūta} \{10\}
\end{align*}
\]

mōrā

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta -} & \text{ l- tom} - \text{ta di l}ki \text{ ūta} \text{ tom} (x_1=10) \\
& \text{ta - ltom} - [y=4] \\
\text{ta} \text{ ka ūta} \text{ l- - tom} - \text{ta l}di \text{ ki ūta} \text{ tom} \\
& \text{ta l}di \text{ ki ūta} \text{ tom} (x_2=17) \\
& \text{ta l- tom} - [y=4]
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta} \text{ ka l}di \text{ ku} \text{ ta -} & \text{lt}a \text{ di ki ūta} \text{ tom} \{12\} \\
\text{lt}a - & [3] \\
\text{ta} \text{ di l}ki \text{ ūta} \text{ tom} \{5\} \\
& \text{ta - ll-} [3] \\
\text{ta} \text{ di} \text{ ki ūta} \text{ tom} \{5\} \\
\end{align*}
\]
Whether by design or by accident, the composition is based arithmetically on seven. The first section is ninety-eight pulses (7*14), and the mōrā is sixty-three (7*9), resulting in a numerically beautiful combination that, unfortunately, is one pulse too long for the context. Two cycles in khaṇḍa gati would require 160 pulses, and the present composition, cogent in all its parts, yields 161.

When we listened together, Raghu noticed the mistake:

RR: Something wrong there—I missed somewhere—I managed; that’s all...

**gaṇam; cycle 125 (18:27)**

Suresh follows with a single repetition of a one-cycle (eighty-pulse) kōrvai:

\[ \]

\[17\] vol. 2, p.248
mṛdaṅgam; cycles 126-7 (18:35)

After one cycle of sarvalaghū, Raghu plays the following one-cycle kōrvai:

da - di - ta - ta di ki ṭa tom
di - ta - ta di ki ṭa tom
ta - 
mōrā
da di ki ṭa tom
da di ki ṭa tom
da di ki ṭa tom
tam - tam -
da di ki ṭa tom
da di ki ṭa tom
da di ki ṭa tom
tam - tam -
da di ki ṭa tom
da di ki ṭa tom
da di ki ṭa tom
da - l- - tom - - - {8}
ltā ka nan g ḍ t r lk ṭ tom - {8}
da l- - - tom - l- - {8}
mōrā
da ka nan lg ḍ t r k ṭ tom - (x=7) [y=1]
ltā ka nan g ḍ t r lk ṭ tom - (x=7) [y=1]
da ka llnan g ḍ t r k ṭ tom (x=7)
Given the high degree of symmetry and order that pervade Raghu's other choices, this particular körvai is surprising in that it is not as well-formed. It seems to have three sections; the first recalls Suresh's körvai 7. The third section, or mōrā, is clear enough; it is the second section that raises questions. Something seems to have been left out. Either a logically-prepared surprise ending, such as:

\[
\begin{align*}
tag & \quad \text{tom} \quad \text{[8]} \\
tag \text{ka nan} & \quad g \quad \text{dt} \quad r \quad k \quad \text{t} \quad \text{tom} \quad \text{[8]} \\
tag & \quad \text{tom} \quad \text{[8]} \\
tag \text{ka nan} & \quad g \quad \text{dt} \quad r \quad k \quad \text{t} \quad \text{tom} \quad \text{[8]} \\
tag & \quad \text{tom} \quad \text{[8]} \\
tag \text{ka nan} & \quad g \quad \text{dt} \quad r \quad k \quad \text{t} \quad \text{tom} \quad (x=7) \quad (y=1) \\
tag \text{ka nan} & \quad g \quad \text{dt} \quad r \quad k \quad \text{t} \quad \text{tom} \quad (x=7) \quad (y=1) \\
tag \text{ka nan} & \quad g \quad \text{dt} \quad r \quad k \quad \text{t} \quad \text{tom} \quad (x=7)
\end{align*}
\]

or a progressive unfolding, such as:
would have been more satisfying. In fact the former, at sixty-three pulses, would have combined with the introductory section to make ninety-six pulses, or twelve times eight. It is nearly inconceivable that a musician with such a formidable control of the form and arithmetic of the music would have overlooked this possibility. It is much more likely that the eighty-pulse composition was arrived at, possibly on the spur of the moment, by dropping the sixteen pulses in question.

**gaṭam; cycle 128 (18:52)**

Suresh plays six beats of sarvalaghulu, finishing with this mōrā:

mōrā

ta di - ki ṭa tom -
ta di - ki ṭa tom -
ta di - ki ṭa tom
mṛdaṅgam; cycles 129-30 (19:00)

As in cycles 123-4, Raghu plays one composition lasting the entire two-cycle duration:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{lta - di - ki lṭa - tom - [9]} \\
\text{ta l- - - tom l- - - [10]} \\
\text{ta ldi - ki ṭa tom l- [7]} \\
\text{ta - di - lki ṭa - tom - [9]} \\
\text{lṭa - ta - lṭom - tom - - [10]} \\
\text{lṭa ka ta di - lki ṭa tom - [9]} \\
\text{ta l- di - ki ṭa l- tom - [9]} \\
\text{ta - ldi - ki ṭa - lṭom - [9]} \\
\text{ta - ta ll- - tom - tom l- - [10]} \\
\text{ta - di l- ta di - ṭi lṭa tom - (x=10) [y=1]} \\
\text{ta - ldi - ta di - lki ṭa tom - (x=10) [y=1]} \\
\text{ta l- di - ta di l- ki ṭa tom (x=10)} \\
\text{ta l- ta di - ṭi lṭa tom - (x=8) [y=1]} \\
\text{ta - lṭa di - ki ṭa lṭom - (x=8) [y=1]} \\
\text{ta - ldi - ki ṭa tom (x=8)} \\
\text{lṭa di - ki ṭa lṭom - (x=6) [y=1]} \\
\text{ta di - lki ṭa tom - (x=6) [y=1]} \\
\text{ta lldi - ki ṭa tom (x=6)}
\end{align*}
\]
While the mōrā in this case is completely symmetrical, the first section is not. The listener is left with a strong suspicion that Raghu is composing on the stage, and that the compositions are not yet finished.

**gaṭam; cycle 131 (19:17)**

Following a two-beat preparation, Suresh plays:

```
  ta di - ki ṭa tom - (x=6) [y=1]
  ta di - ki ṭa tom - (x=6) [y=1]
  ta di - ki ṭa tom (x=6)

  ta di - ki ṭa tom - (x=6) [y=1]
  ta di - ki ṭa tom - (x=6) [y=1]
  ta di - ki ṭa tom (x=6)

  ta di - ki ṭa tom - (x=6) [y=1]
  ta di - ki ṭa tom - (x=6) [y=1]
  ta di - ki ṭa tom (x=6)
```

**miśra koraippu; cycles 132-159 (19:25)**

In a miśra koraippu, drummers trade groups of seven-pulse phrases within sections of the cycle. Eight sevens constitute a full cycle, four sevens constitute a half-cycle, two sevens constitute a quarter-cycle, and one seven, an eighth-cycle. The eight sevens of a full cycle are grouped together so as to
resolve at the next āṭṭuppu; the smaller groups behave similarly in their corresponding beat-groups. That is, half-cycles will resolve at the middle of beats five and one, quarters at the middles of beats one, three, five, and seven, etc. The most common context for miśra koraippu is in ādi tāla, caturaśra gati; in this situation, grouping the eight sevens together results in the full cycle group taking seven full beats (fifty-six pulses), so that it begins on the second beat of the cycle, or after eight pulses.

In an unusual move, Raghu begins the full cycles not in caturaśra gati, or eight pulses per beat, but in khaṇḍa gati, or ten pulses per beat. In order to understand where the full cycle group of eight sevens must begin within the cycle, it will be helpful to the reader to think of the structure of the koraippu according to the following logic.

The cycle is made up of eight ten-pulse groups, which constitute the beats. For the koraippu, the eight seven-pulse phrases must end the cycle, which means eight three-pulse groups must begin it. That is to say,

\[ 8 \times 10 = (8 \times 3) + (8 \times 7) \]

Thought of in this way, the progression to half-cycles (4\times3)+(4\times7), quarter-cycles (2\times3)+(2\times7), and eighth-cycles (1\times3)+(1\times7) becomes easy to conceive. However, ease of conception does not guarantee ease of execution; at no stage does the group of sevens begin comfortably, i.e., coincident with a mātra.
full cycles; 132-145

mṛdaṅgam; 132 (19:25)

Raghu begins his first full cycle turn with three eight-pulse groups, before beginning the eight sevens.

\[ \text{idin - - ta - idin - ta} \\
\text{din - l- ta - din - lta} \\
\text{din - - ta l- din - ta} \]

\[ \text{jo l̄nu jo ṇu ta ki l̄ta} \\
\text{ta - di - l̄tam - -} \\
\text{ta - l̄di - tam - -} \\
\text{l̄ta - di - tam l- -} \\
\text{ta - - l- t r g ḍ tom} \\
\text{ta l- - - t r g ḍ l̄tom} \\
\text{ta - - - l̄t r g ḍ tom} \\
\text{ta - ll- - t r g ḍ tom} \]

gaṇam; 133 (19:34)

Apparently surprised by the rarity of context, Suresh misses the sevens, playing straight khaṇḍa patterns.
mṛdaṅgam; 134 (19:42)

Raghu repeats the same patterns as in his previous turn, as if to give Suresh more of a clue.

gaṭam; 135 (19:51)

Suresh now understands that a mīśra motif is going on, but not that it is in the koraippu form. Rather than the eight sevens that Raghu played, he plays ten sevens from middle of beat two, beginning with a mātra.

mṛdaṅgam; 136 (20:00)

Picking up Suresh's idea, Raghu plays five sevens from middle of beat two; he then switches to caturaśra gati and plays four sevens from beat six.

gaṭam; 137 (20:08)

Suresh could have followed Raghu's lead and switched to caturaśra gati here: instead, he remains in khaṇḍa gati throughout, and again plays ten sevens from the middle of beat two.
mṛdaṅgam; 138 (20:16)

Raghu repeats what he played in cycle 136, as if to indicate that he wishes a full change to caturaśra gati.

gaṭam; 139 (20:27)

Suresh reverses Raghu’s pattern, beginning in caturaśra gati (four sevens from the middle of beat two), then changing to khanḍa gati and playing five sevens from beat six.

mṛdaṅgam; 140 (20:35)

Raghu, now entirely in caturaśra gati, plays the following figure:

\[
\text{ta} \quad - \quad - \quad - \quad - \quad \text{ta} \\
\text{tom} \quad - \quad - \quad - \quad - \quad \text{tom}
\]

This may be understood as two groups of seven, in which only the first and last pulses are articulated. It will be the basis for a motivic expansion of the articulated material.
gaṭam; 141 (21:02)

Suresh 'knows' this idea, but repeats the same version in order to let Raghu guide the development.

mṛdaṅgam; 142 (20:53)

This time Raghu plays a full mṛdaṅga yati statement, using four of the eight sevens to expand the articulated material, and four to diminish it

\[
\begin{align*}
ta & \quad - \quad - \quad - \quad ta \\
tom & \quad - \quad - \quad ta \ ka \\
tom & \quad - \quad - \quad ta \ ki \ ūta \\
tom & \quad - \quad ta \ ka \ jo \ ūnu \\
tom & \quad - \quad ta \ ka \ jo \ ūnu \\
tom & \quad - \quad - \quad ta \ ki \ ūta \\
tom & \quad - \quad - \quad - \quad ta \ ka \\
tom & \quad - \quad - \quad - \quad - \quad ta
\end{align*}
\]

This is the most concise possible exposition of the motif, which could have been developed at considerable length.

gaṭam; 143 (21:02)

Suresh takes a somewhat less concise approach. He leaves the first half intact, and uses the second half for expansion.
Raghu now changes motivic ideas, moving to a fourteen-pulse phrase evocative of the sarvalaghu archetype suggested by the highlighted syllables.¹⁸

\[
\text{ta - ka din - gu din - gu nan - gu ta ka}
\]

Raghu seems to attach a special significance to figures that evoke

\[
\text{ta - din - din - na -}
\]

since he used this particular phrase as a subject for discussion about influences

DN: ...I remember one time when we were talking, you said there were times, for example, that you took ideas from a band you heard in the street.

RR: Yes, yes—not band—The month of December is a very auspicious month for us—all these temple festivals. In those days that one month of December they used to have this procession bāljans in the morning—early morning. You know that great composer Papanasam Sivan? He used that Kapali temple—that temple he used to sing early morning through thirty days. If you want to listen to Papanasam Sivan...

DN: You go there.

RR: Yes. Similarly in my village—there was no Papanasam Sivan there, still they used to sing this āśṭapati. And most of

¹⁸See the khanḍa gati section above for another application of the archetype to a non-quadriple situation
these āṣṭapatis are in slow miśra cāpu—in that speed only. It’s group singing, bhajan—you know? but they don’t have a specialist drummer for that. And also, even if they have, the drummer will not carry the drum—it’s too heavy. He will just take a kanjīra, and just keep time with that—and each āṣṭapati when it ends, he won’t know how to end it. He doesn’t know any kōrvai or any such thing—he just plays with lakṣya...

\[\text{ta} - \text{din} - \text{din} - \text{din} - \text{din} - [\text{ta}]\]

He ended like that. For each āṣṭapati,

\[\text{ta} - \text{din} - \text{din} - \text{din} - \text{din} - [\text{ta}]\]

he ended like that. This

\[\text{ta} - \text{din} - \text{din} - \text{din} - \text{din} - \text{din} - [\text{ta}]\]

started working in my mind. I just reframed it a little and composed.\textsuperscript{18}

...This is the pattern I got from that bhajana player\textsuperscript{19}

In this case, he plays it twice in caturaśra gati, then three times in tiśra.

\textsuperscript{18}vol.2, p.95

\textsuperscript{19}vol.2, p 248
gaṭam; 145 (21:20)

Suresh follows Raghu's change exactly.

half cycles; 146-149 (21:28-22:00)

The entire section consists of the alternation of groups of three fourteen-pulse phrases in tiśra gati.

quarter cycles; 150-154 (22:00-22:32)

The miśra koraippu is left behind at this point; groups of three eight-pulse phrases are alternated in cycle 150, changing to caturaśra gati in cycle 151

eighth cycles; 154-158 (22:32-23:23)

Raghu and Suresh alternate single beats until they join together in cycle 159
Ending Section; cycles 159-172

sarvalaghū reprise; cycles 159-161 (23:23)

The return to caturaśra gati is short-lived; the pattern

tā din - tā

which appeared previously in cycles 101-2 in caturaśra, tiśra, and khaṇḍa

gatis, is this time converted into its miśra gati version (23:32):

tā - di - tan - gu

before changing back to caturaśra in cycle 161 (23:44).

parans; cycles 162-166 (23:50)

change to tiśram; cycle 164

Even in the paran section Raghu does not stay in caturaśra gati for long. In
cycle 164 (24:02) he drops into tiśram in preparation for the long mūrā and
final kōrvai.
Long Mōrā; cycles 166-169 (24:21-24:45)

The long mōrā is technically a śaṅkīṛṭa jāti composition, at 288 pulses (9*32), but it is most commonly used in tiśra gati, as a three-cycle cadence. The widespread use of a śaṅkīṛṭa jāti composition in the tiśra gati context is probably a consequence of the obviousness of its derivation. The bold syllables in the example below have been appended to the standard caturaśra jāti long mōrā, resulting in lines of thirty-six pulses that still sound very much related to the original.

\footnote{See Brown, v.2, pp.189-91; also, in this study, Ramabhadràn, cycles 70-71, and Murthy, cycles 66-67}
The use of this long mōrā is not at all unusual. However, Raghu begins it from the middle of the third beat in cycle 166, rather than from the eduppu; this is a less usual practice. He has obviously used this placement of the long mōrā for the purpose of setting up the final kōrvai.

22 All four of the other drummers in this study began their long mōrās from the eduppu.
Final Körvai; cycles 169-172 (24:45)

The final körvai is apparently in the ‘ta din gi ṇa tom’ form, and seems to represent a simple reductive idea. Closer examination reveals two levels of reduction, and thus a distinct division into introductory section and mörä.

\[
\begin{align*}
ta & - - - - - - di - - - - - - ki - - - - - - \\
    \text{ṭa} & - - - - - to\text{m} - - - - - - \{40\} \\
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
ta & - - - - di - - - - ki - - - - \\
    \text{ṭa} & - - - - to\text{m} - - - - \{30\} \\
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
ta & - - di - - ki - - \text{ṭa} - - to\text{m} - - \{20\} \\
\end{align*}
\]

mörä (1st and 2nd times)

\[
\begin{align*}
ta & - - di - - ki - - \text{ṭa} - - to\text{m} - - (x_1=15) \\
    ta & - di - - ki - - \text{ṭa} - to\text{m} - - (x_2=10) \\
    ta & di ki \text{ṭa} to\text{m} (x_3=5) \\
\end{align*}
\]

In the introductory section, each syllable reduces by two syllables at each stage; from eight pulses per syllable in the first line, to six, and then four. An exhaustive reduction would require that the next line be ten pulses long. Instead, the next three lines reduce according to single increments; three, two, and one pulse per syllable respectively, at least in the first two repetitions. If the third repetition were identical, a case could be made for the last line of the
introductory section functioning as part of the mōrā; instead, the third repetition clearly reveals the two-part analysis as accurate:

mōrā (3rd time)
   dim  -  -  -  ta di ki ña tom (x=10) [y=0]
   dim  -  -  -  ta di ki ña tom (x=10) [y=0]
   dim  -  -  -  ta di ki ña tom (x=10)

An interesting consequence of the third mōrā is that ‘x’ now satisfies the two pulse per syllable reductive demand of the introductory section. The mōrā in the first two repetitions is distinct from the first section because it represents a reduction of a different order. The mōrā in the third repetition, which continues the reductive order of the introductory section, is set apart by its identical triple repetition.

The use of a final kōrvai that does not fit the usual eḻuppu-to-eḻuppu practice draws attention to it. Why use it, and not a similar composition designed for the application? The answer may be that this kōrvai, at 120 pulses per repetition (4*5*6), recalls the compund-jāṭi nature of kōrvai 1, especially since it occupies 360 pulses in its full triple exposition. While no suggestion is being made that such a connection was conscious on Raghu’s part, the resulting symmetry is profound. It is played in tīśra gati through all three repetitions, taking a total of thirty beats.
Sankaran Analysis

TOTAL CYCLES: 125
TOTAL TIME: 20' 43"
AVERAGE BPM: 48
FIRST MINUTE: 44
LAST MINUTE: 48

Vilamba Kāla: cycles 1-27

Sankaran begins with variations of the traditional archetype

na - din - din - na -

along with single-beat suffixes: for example, in cycle 3

lt ka jo ṇu ltk j ṇt lāṅ g
lt ka din k ṭ ldin k ṭ din ta

and cycle 4:

ltom ta tom ta l tom ta t lāṅ g

The suffixes that are introduced in cycle 6 and 7 (00:40-1:04) have a specific purpose: they are setting up the mōrā in cycle 8. The suffix follows:
mōrā to first eḍuppu; cycle 8 (1:05)

Up to this point Sankaran’s phrases have all begun and ended on the sama. The function of the first mōrā is to introduce the eḍuppu, to which all future cadences will resolve. He accomplishes this introduction by using a śaṅkīrṇa jāti mōrā that begins on the midpoint of cycle 8 and resolves to the next eḍuppu.¹

lta ka ta ri ki ta ta ka
lta ka ta ri ki ta lom - lom - ta - (x=10)
               tom - ki ta lta ka [y=3]
ta ka ta ri ki ta lta ka
    ta ka ta ri ki ta lom - tom - ta - (x=10)
               tom - lki ti ta ka [y=3]
ta ka ta ri lki ti ta ka
    ta ka ta ri ltki ti ta lom - tom - ta - (x=10) [tom]

The ‘y’ figures in the mōrā are unusual among those found throughout this study, in that they are relatively densely articulated. The effect of this relative density is to lessen contrast with the ‘x’ figure, probably for purposes of disguise. It is the case throughout Sankaran’s solo that the boundaries between sarvalaghu and cadential phrases are often blurred, with the effect that one is

¹Sankaran prefers to call this a ‘nine-akṣara mōrā’, reserving the term ‘jāti’ for other uses (vol.2, pp 259-60). The notation is in half-time for convenience in reading.
often unaware that a körvai or mörä has begun. A kind of seamlessness is generated that will be pointed out as examples arise.

Körvai 1; cycles 15-17

preparation (1:46-2:13)

All half-cycles from cycle 12 through 14 are appended with the suffix

\begin{align*}
\text{ta - di - ta län - gu} \\
\text{ta ka di - ta län - gu tom -} \\
\text{ta di - ki ťa tom \{12\}}
\end{align*}

The figure contains elements from both parts of the körvai; the first part,

\begin{align*}
\text{ta - di - ta län - gu} \\
\text{ta ka di - ta län - gu tom -}
\end{align*}

is actually the opening line of the composition, while the second,

\begin{align*}
\text{ta di - ki ťa tom}
\end{align*}
is not only a compressed version of the end figure in the opening line, but also represents the first 'x' in the mōrā to come.

**structure**

The kōrvai is in two parts: a gopucca yati introductory section, and a mōrā in the unfolding form. The two parts are linked by the 'x₁' figure, which has a double function as the last line in the introductory section. The whole is thus a damaru yati composition comprising sixty-four pulses, or one full cycle.²

²Notation is in half-time
In terms of structure, the ‘A’ section represents an interesting application of formal ideas that appear in other solos. For example, there are other körvais that begin with two-part ‘A’ sections in which the second part of the line has a double function as the first ‘x’. There are also several in which the A section is followed by a ‘bridge’ section that takes the gopucca yati ‘ta din gi ṇa tom’

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3 e.g., Munthy körvai 1
form, including at least one in which the bridge section is a trikāla.\(^4\) This körvai's uniqueness arises from the seamless interweaving of A section, bridge, and mōrā. As will be shown below, the second part of each A section is a stage in a gopucca yati trikāla 'ta din gi ṇa toṁ' bridge, the last line of which begins the mōrā.

\(^4\)Raghu körvai 1
A1;  
first part  
ta - di - ta lān - gu  
ta ka di - ta lān - gu tom - {9}

second part  
t - - di - - - - - - ki - - - ta - - tom - - - {12}

A2;  
first part  
di - ta lān - gu  
ta ka di - ta lān - gu tom - {8}

second part  
ta - di - - - ki - ta - tom - {6}

A3;  
first part  
ta lān - gu  
ta ka di - ta lān - gu tom - {7}

second part  
ta di - ki ta tom [3] (x₁)

The proportional beauty of this arrangement is enhanced by the use of the last ‘ta di - ki ta tom’ as an ‘x’ figure; the A sections represents the mīṣra reduction [21-14-7] while the mōrā expands in a cogent tiṣra fashion, ((3)-(2)-(6)-(2)-(9)). A graphic representation follows:
In order to highlight the structural beauty of this arrangement, it may be interesting to re-order the körvai according to another formal scheme. In this case, the first parts of all the 'A' figures will be grouped together. The second parts will be grouped into a single trikāla bridge leading to the mōrā:
A
   ta - di - ta lān - gu
   ta ka di - ta lān - gu tom - {9}

di - ta lān - gu
   ta ka di - ta lān - gu tom - {8}

ta lān - gu
   ta ka di - ta lān - gu tom - {7}

bridge
   ta - - - di - - - - - - ki - - - ūta - - - - tom - - - - {12}
   ta - di - - - ki - ūta - - tom - {6}

mōrā
   ta di - ki ūta tom (x₁=3)
   tam - - - [y=2]
   ta di - ki ūta tom
   ta di - ki ūta tom (x₂=6)
   tam - - - [y=2]
   ta di - ki ūta tom
   ta di - ki ūta tom
   ta di - ki ūta tom (x₃=9)

Arranged in this way, the körvaī is still well-formed, even beautiful, but the
seamlessness of Sankaran’s version is lost. While the bridge section and mōrā
are clearly related, the A section shows no discernible thematic similarity with
the following sections.⁵ This körvaī is Sankaran’s own composition.⁶

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⁵This is in fact a fairly common type; for other examples, see Raghu, körvaīs 1 & 3, and Murthy, körvaī 6

⁶vol.2, p.263
At sixty-four total pulses, the körvai fits perfectly within one cycle of ādi tāḷa. It is played three times (2:14, 2:24, 2:34), ēçuppu-to-ēçuppu. Sankaran follows it with an arudi made up of thematic material taken from the mōrā:

The ēçuppu is important, but this coming in at the fifth beat is equally important. For the arudi I would also use the same material. In other words, I would make my ideas really clear, you have heard all the development, you have heard the körvai, I have landed at the ēçuppu, and I am coming back now to the arudi, the fifth beat, and I will use the same phrase:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta} & \quad \text{din} \quad \text{gi} \quad \text{ṇa} \quad \text{tom} \\
& \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{-} \quad \text{-} \quad \text{-} \quad \text{-} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{din} \quad \text{gi} \quad \text{ṇa} \quad \text{tom} \\
& \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{-} \quad \text{-} \quad \text{-} \quad \text{-} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{din} \quad \text{gi} \quad \text{ṇa} \quad \text{tom} \quad \text{[ta]}
\end{align*}
\]

So that's how it works. In other words, it's highly structured.\textsuperscript{7}

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\textsuperscript{7}vol.2, p.265
Palani Subramania Pillai composition; cycles 21-27 (3:17-4:29)

This particular composition is universally attributed to Sankaran's guru, Palani Subramania Pillai. It is quite simple in structure, and for some reason has entered the pool of material common to mrdanga players of all styles. In other solos within this study its opening phrases are quoted briefly\(^8\) or developed along other lines.\(^9\) For Mani, this composition, along with its multigati treatment, provided the inspiration and model for an entirely new approach to composing.\(^{10}\)

structure

The composition is made up of two parts. The first, labeled as 'A' in the following notation, is subdivided into nearly identical halves; these differ only in the articulation, or lack of it, of the initial syllable, indicated below in bold type. An entire statement of 'A' comprises sixty-four pulses. As usual, the second part is the mōrā; in this case it is in a simple form wherein \((x=20)\) and \([y=2]\), for a total duration of sixty-four pulses.

---

\(^8\)Murthy, cycle 4; Raghu, cycles 5-9

\(^9\)Ramabhadran, cycles 4-8

\(^{10}\)see Mani Analysis, p.211 ff
A1
tam - - - ta ka din - din - din - na t r g ḍ {16}
tom ta ka tom ta ka din - tam - tam - dim - - - - - - {16}

A2
tom ta ka din - din - din - na t r g ḍ {16}
tom ta ka tom ta ka din - tam - tam - dim - - - - - - {16}

A1
tam - ki ṭa ta ka din - din - din - na t r g ḍ {16}
tom ta ka tom ta ka din - tam - tam - dim - - - - - - {16}

A2
tom ta ka tom ta ka din na din na k ṭ t k dim - - - - - - {16}

mōrā
ta - ki ṭa ta ka di na tom ta ki ṭa ta ka di na tom - ta - (x=20)
tom - [y=2]

A2
ta - ki ṭa ta ka di na tom ta ki ṭa ta ka di na tom - ta - (x=20)
tom - [y=2]

A2
ta - ki ṭa ta ka di na tom ta ki ṭa ta ka di na tom - ta - (x=20)

---

treatment

The structure of this composition is, as has been shown, quite simple, although its sound is quite beautiful. The key to its popularity is its multi-kāla treatment, which is made possible by its 192-pulse duration. It is often heard played once each in caturaśra, tiśra, and double-time caturaśra gatis. In this case, Sankaran plays it once each in caturaśra gati (3:17), khaṇḍa gati (3:48), and tiśra gati (4:09). The first and third repetitions need no adjustment of structure. In order to play it in khaṇḍa gati, however, the second 'A2' is omitted.
By removing thirty-two pulses, Sankaran generates the necessary 160 pulses to fit two cycles.

It should be pointed out that the execution of this composition in these three gatis is considered quite difficult,\textsuperscript{11} and will only be undertaken in the company of a tāḷa-keeper who is known to keep very steady time.

...It's like walking on a rope or something—it's that close between khanḍam and tiśram. And to be able to do it in the slow speed, at each and every point you have to be really alert, because everything is in groups of four. It never changes.\textsuperscript{12}

**Madhyama Kāla: cycles 28-106**

After resolving the final, tiśra gati repetition to the eḻuppu in cycle 28, Sankaran plays a two-beat arudi to the middle of cycle 28 before beginning the sarvalaghu section that follows. He begins with the stately (4:44)

\[\text{ta - din - ta - din -}\]

\textsuperscript{11}See also the commentary following kōrvai 1, Raghu Analysis

\textsuperscript{12}vol.2, p.267
before filling out all eight pulses of each beat with the following pattern in cycle 31 (5:01).

\[ \text{ta ṇa di ṇa ta ta di ṇa} \]

In cycle 34 he redoubles the speed of articulation, first at the beginnings of phrases (5:34),

\[ \text{t ṇ t ṇ t ṇ j ṇ ta ta di ṇa} \]

and then throughout

\[ \text{t ṇ t ṇ j ṇ t ṇ} \]

The accent shift that begins in cycle 36 (5:34) is of a type that can be encountered in other solos. It is accomplished by dropping out certain right hand strokes, leaving those that fall between, rather than on, hand gestures. For example:

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
\text{kin} & \text{d} & \text{in} & \text{j} & \text{n} & \text{t} & \text{n} & \text{k} & \text{d} & \text{n} & \text{j} & \text{n} & \text{j} & \text{n} & \text{t} & \text{n} \\
O & \text{n} & \text{N} & \text{n} & \text{n} & \text{O} & \text{n} & \text{n} & \text{N} & \text{n} & \text{G} & \text{G} & \text{G} & \text{G} & \text{G} & \text{G} \\
\end{array}
\]

\[^{13}\text{Murthy's half time version, cycles 9&10; Mani's extended double-time version, cycles 50-55}\]
At the end of cycle 36 (5:58), the shifted accent sarvalaghu is followed by the suffix

\[ \text{d n din k} \ddot{t} \text{t k} \]

which becomes increasingly frequent, until it takes over completely in the second half of cycle 38. Beginning with beat six, it becomes part of the ‘x’ figure in the following mōrā.

mōrā; cycle 38 (6:18)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ldin tan k} & \ddot{t} \text{t k l}\text{din tan k}\ddot{t} \text{t k l}\text{tom ta (x=10) tom [y=1]} \\
\text{din ltan k} & \ddot{t} \text{t k din ltan k}\ddot{t} \text{t k l}\text{ta (x=10) tom [y=1]} \\
\text{din tan lk} & \ddot{t} \text{t k din tan llk} \ddot{t} \text{t k l}\text{tom ta [tom]} \\
\end{align*}
\]

sarvalaghu

From cycle 39, the sarvalaghu patterns coincide with mātras, and are based on the following figure:

\[ \text{ta jo } \nu \text{ ta na ta jo } \nu \text{ ta na ta jo } \nu \text{ tam k} \ddot{t} \text{t k} \]
In cycle 43, Sankaran shifts the beginnings of patterns to half-beats in preparation for körvai 2 (7:10). The means by which he makes the shift are intentionally difficult to detect:

SS: ...the way it gets to the eṭuppu point of the tāḷa is unrecognizable.

DN: That's exactly right. It's very slippery. How did you do that, by the way? (laughter)

SS: Well, maybe I should keep just one or two things to myself, right?¹⁴

---

Körvai 2; cycles 46-47

preparation

Sankaran begins the preparation for körvai 2 by use of the following suffixes, beginning in cycle 43 (7:15):

ta ka ta din - gu ta din - gu ta -

¹⁴vol. 2, p.271
Following a traditional path, he introduces the suffix first at half-cycle, then at quarter-cycle intervals, until the middle of cycle 45. At this point he shifts to the phrase (7:31),

\[
\text{tam - tam - ta din -} \\
\text{--- tam - ta din -}
\]

which prefigures the introductory line of körvai 2 in the next cycle.

**structure**

The solkaṭṭu follows:
\[ltam - tam - ta \text{ din - gu}\]
\[ltam - ta \text{ din - gu}\]
\[ta \text{ din l- gu}\]
\[ta \text{ - - - din - l- - - - - l- - - \{17\}}\]
\[tam - tam - ta \text{ din l- gu}\]
\[tam - ta \text{ din - gu}\]
\[lta \text{ din - gu}\]
\[ta \text{ - - l\text{din}} \text{ - - - - - l- - - - \{17\}}\]
\[tam - tam - lta \text{ din - gu}\]
\[tam - ta \text{ din l- gu}\]
\[ta \text{ din - gu}\]
\[ta \text{ - l- - din - - - - l- - - - \{17\}}\]
\[tam - lta \text{ din - gu}\]
\[ta \text{ din - gu}\]
\[lt a\text{ - - din - - ll- - - - - - - \{13\}}\]
\[ltam - ta \text{ din - gu \{3\}}\]

\textit{mörā}
\[ta \text{ din l- gu ta - - - din - l- -}\]
\[ta \text{ din - gu ta - l- - din - - -}\]
\[ta \text{ din l- gu ta - (x=15)}\]
\[ta \text{ - - l- - - -}\]
\[\text{dim - - - l- - - - [y=8]}\]
\[ta \text{ din - gu lta - - - din - - -}\]
\[lt a \text{ din - gu ta - - l\text{din - - -}}\]
\[ta \text{ din - gu lta - (x=15)}\]
\[ta \text{ - - - - l- -}\]
\[\text{dim - - - - l- - [y=8]}\]
\[ta \text{ din - gu ta - l- - din - - -}\]
\[ta \text{ din l- gu ta - - - din - ll- -}\]
\[ta \text{ din - gu ta - (x=15)}\]
Körvai 2, a perfect example of the 'enfolded' form, does not comprise distinct parts in the same sense as most of the other compositions analyzed in this study. Its complete thematic and formal coherence suggest the 'ta din gi ṇa tom' form; as in körvai 1, however, it is the use of a familiar compositional device in a less familiar context that generates a fresh idea.

As has been seen, the 'ta din gi ṇa tom' form is usually characterized by a gopucca reduction in which kārvai, or unsounded events, are the elements reduced. This is followed by a mōrā generated from the same thematic material. In the present case the reduction is achieved by reducing sounded events; that is, the phrase itself is shortened, from

\[ \text{tam - tam - ta din - gu} \]

to

\[ \text{tam - ta din - gu} \]

and finally to

\[ \text{ta din - gu} \]

At first glance, the körvai appears to be oddly-formed; There seem to be three repetitions of the first section,
tam - tam - ta din - gu
   tam - ta din - gu
ta din - gu
ta - - - din - - - - - - - -

followed by only one full statement of the first reduction

   tam - ta din - gu
ta din - gu
ta - - - din - - - - - - - -

after which comes the mōrā; this seems to be preceded by a solitary

   tam - ta din - gu

A closer examination reveals that all three stages of reduction are fully expressed in an enfolded form. The following graphic analysis will help to clarify this interweaving:
The mörä is in the compound form; that is, each repetition of the 'x' figure is itself well-formed according to the structure 'x y x y'. The boundaries of the 'x' and 'y' figures are obscured, however; the change from 'x' to 'y' seems to take place in an unsounded pulse, as indicated by the brackets below:
ta din - gu ta - [- - din - - - ]
ta din - gu ta - [- - din - - - ]
ta din - gu ta - (x=15)

This analysis is suggested by the presence of the final ‘ta -’ at the end of the third line. It would not have been difficult for Sankaran to generate a figure in which the change occurred on a sounded pulse; the two pulses that comprise ‘ta -’ could have been absorbed quite legitimately within the two ‘din’s, resulting in each of them being five, rather than four pulses long. While the result would still be well-formed, there would be a two-fold aesthetic loss.

First, there is a proportional symmetry between the eight-pulse

\[ ta - - - din - - - \{8\} \]

within the ‘x’ figure and the sixteen-pulse

\[ ta - - - - - - din - - - - - - \{16\} \]

figure that comprises ‘y’. In addition, the natural surprise that is a consequence of hearing the final ‘ta -’ would be lost.

treatment

Körvai 2 is played only once, eḻuppu-to-eḻuppu. (7:36)
change to khanḍa gati; cycles 49-51

After the following fifteen-pulse arudi in cycle 48 (7:57), which is again made up of phrases taken from the preceding körvai, Sankaran begins the transition to khanḍa gati:

\[
\begin{align*}
ta & \text{ din - gu tam - (x=3)} \\
tam & \text{ - ki ta ta ka [y=3]} \\
ta & \text{ din - gu tam - (x=3)} \\
tam & \text{ - ki ta ta ka [y=3]} \\
ta & \text{ din - gu tam - (x=3)}
\end{align*}
\]

The change to khanḍa gati is accomplished in a manner analogous to that of Raghu;¹⁵ that is, a caturaśra jati sarvalaghu figure,

\[
\text{ldin - tan t r lk t ta jo ṇu}
\]

is alternated with its khanḍa gati derivative

\[
\text{ldin - tan t r k t lta jo ṇu ta na}
\]

through several cycles until Sankaran finally settles in khanḍa gati. In this case, he takes two cycles to make the full change (8:15-29).

khanḍa gati sarvalaghu; cycles 51-59

¹⁵cycles 71 ff.
Once he has fully established khanḍa gati, Sankaran explores a wide range of sarvalaghū possibilities, including gumiki and double-time figures, before introducing any strictly cadential material. In cycle 58, he introduces the following figure at quarter-cycle intervals (9:42):

```
tam  t  r  g  ḍ  tom  t  r  lg  ḍ  d  k  t  k  t  r  g  ḍ
```

This is reduced in cycle 59 (9:48)

```
ltam  t  r  g  ḍ  tom  t  r  lg  ḍ  d  k  t  k  t  r  g  ḍ  {10}
ltam  t  r  g  ḍ  tom  t  r  lg  ḍ  d  k  t  k  t  r  g  ḍ  {10}
ltam  t  r  g  ḍ  d  ḍ  d  k  lt  k  t  r  g  ḍ  {8}
tam  t  r  lg  ḍ  d  ḍ  d  k  t  k  t  r  lg  ḍ  {8}

tam  g  ḍ  d  k  t  k  lt  r  g  ḍ  {6}
tam  g  ḍ  d  k  lt  k  t  r  g  ḍ  {6}
```

mōrā; cycle 59 (9:54)

```
tam  t  r  lg  ḍ  d  ḍ  d  k  t  k  t  r  lg  ḍ  (x=8)
tam  -  ki  ṭa  [y=4]
ltam  t  r  g  ḍ  d  ḍ  d  k  lt  k  t  r  g  ḍ  (x=8)
tam  -  ṭk  ṭa  [y=4]
tam  t  r  g  ḍ  llg  ḍ  d  k  t  k  t  r  g  ḍ  [tam](x=8)
```

Like the transition to khanḍa gati, this reduction and mōrā are typical of Palani Subramania Pillai's style. In fact the transition, reduction and mōrā are often played all together. In this case, Sankaran has broken up the group in order to introduce some of his own ideas:
DN: ...That whole section sounded to me as if you started off with his idea...

SS: Right, then I got into my idea, which was extemporization.

DN: And then back into that, back into some of your own things, and then back to the thing you had started, but in an elaborated form. Another thing is, there are passages in there of extremely fast fingerings I don't think I've heard anybody else do. I wonder if those are things that are original to you.

SS: Yes. Those are mine—only mîtu sollu. It's extremely hard to play, because that speed is ten per beat. I like certain nuancing with the mîtu sollu, and also creating certain dynamics with that. As I said, I try to travel at all levels with these patterns before I resolve with a mîrâ or a körvai...\^₁⁶

\^₁⁶vol.2, p.273-4
Körvai 3; cycles 67-72

preparation

Sankaran begins to prepare the körvai in cycle 61 with the statement of its introductory phrase (10:09):

\[ lta - ta \, ki \, řa \, lta \, ṇa \, di - ta \, řtom - ta - tom \, l- \, - - - \]

This may be understood as two groups of ten pulses each; the first is divided five plus five:

\[ ta - ta \, ki \, řa \, ta \, ka \, di - ta \]

and the second as four plus six

\[ řtom - ta - \, řtom - - - - \]

Beginning in cycle 62 (10:24), there is a shift of emphasis to the second grouping in the following variations:

\[ řtom - ta - \, to - ta - ta \]

\[ řtom - ta - \, to - ta \, to - ta \]

\[ řtom \, to - ta \, ka \, to - ta - ta \]
Both halves of cycle 65 (10:43-58) end with the suffix

{- }t r  g  Ḍ  tom  (x=3) [y=0]
t r  g  Ḍ  tom  (x=3) [y=0]
t r  g  Ḍ  tom  (x=3)

which is technically in the mōrā form. The first two quarters of cycle 66 also end with this figure, and it is repeated three times to introduce the kōrvai.

Throughout the preparation, the phrases begin and end on half-beats, as if the entire beat structure of the tāḷa had been shifted because of the eṟuppū.

structure

The kōrvai is composed in three distinct sections. The first is a reduction in 5 stages, each of which is played twice; it comprises a total of 104 pulses.¹⁷ The second is quite brief, only nine pulses, and raises some questions that will be addressed below. The mōrā is in the compound form, and takes forty-seven pulses.

¹⁷In the notation, the bold characters in each stage represent material that will be dropped at the next stage
Section A
Stage 1
lta - ta ki ṭa lta ka din - ta
ltom - ta - tom l- - - - {20}

lta ka ta ki ṭa ta ka din - ta
ltom - ta - tom l- - - - {20}

Stage 2
lta - ta ki ṭa lta ka din - ta
ltom - ta - {14}

ta lka ta ki ṭa ta lka din - ta
tom l- ta - {14}

Stage 3
ta - lta ki ṭa ta ka lldin - ta {10}
ta ka lta ki ṭa ta ka lldin - ta {10}

Stage 4
ta - lta ki ṭa {5}
ta ka lta ki ṭa {5}

Stage 5
ta ki ṭa {3}
ta ki ṭa {3}
Section B

mōrā

ta ḍi lki ṭa tom

ta ḍi lki ṭa tom

ta ḍi lki ṭa tom - (x=15) [y=1]

ltā di ki ṭa tom

ta ḍi lki ṭa tom

ta ldi ki ṭa tom - (x=15) [y=1]

Saṭa di ki ṭa tom

ltā di ki ṭa tom

tlta di ki ṭa tom (x=15)

Section A represents, as indicated above, an orderly reduction, but of a
different type from the strictly arithmetical gopurca reductions with which the
educated listener is certainly familiar. Indeed, by strictly arithmetical criteria, the
present reduction is not orderly; it is, however, well-formed. The reader will note
that the reduction proceeds by the progressive deletion (at least until the last
stage) of the phrase units encountered in the preparation outlined above. Thus
the first segment to be deleted is the six-pulse

\[\text{tom} \ - \ - \ - \ -\]

The second is the four-pulse

\[\text{tom} \ - \ \text{ta} \ -\]
and so on. In the fifth stage it is initial, rather than final segments that are removed. This stage is followed by the rather curious ‘B’ section, which is composed of three groups of three pulses each. These nine pulses could very easily have been distributed through the elements of the mōrā in several interesting and symmetrical ways, resulting in a mōrā of fifty-six pulses: one such example follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ldi} \quad \text{ki} \quad \text{tà} \quad \text{tom} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ldi} \quad \text{ki} \quad \text{tà} \quad \text{tom} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ldi} \quad \text{ki} \quad \text{tà} \quad \text{tom} - (x_1=15) \ [y=1] \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{di} \quad - \quad \text{ki} \quad \text{tà} \quad \text{tom} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{di} \quad - \quad \text{ki} \quad \text{tà} \quad \text{tom} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{di} \quad - \quad \text{lí} \quad \text{tà} \quad \text{tom} - (x_2=18) \ [y=1] \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{l} \quad \text{di} \quad - \quad \text{ki} \quad \text{tà} \quad \text{tom} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{di} \quad - \quad \text{lí} \quad \text{tà} \quad \text{tom} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ldi} \quad - \quad \text{ki} \quad \text{tà} \quad \text{tom} \ (x_3=21)
\end{align*}
\]

If for some reason one wished to preserve the sama yati shape of Sankaran’s original mōrā, the ‘\(x_2\)’ in the previous example could certainly have been repeated three times to satisfy this wish. A master of Sankaran’s standing knows countless ways to eliminate those nine pulses if he wants to do so.

One possible explanation for the existence of the ‘B’ section is that Sankaran was composing on the spot. In this case the ‘B’ section could be seen
as a ‘patch’, enabling him to finish as he needed to. 18 This is almost certainly not the case, since the ‘A’ section is nearly identical to one played by Raghu 19 and may be assumed to be part of the same pool of shared rhythmic materials as the Palani Subramania Pillai composition analyzed above.

The inescapable conclusion is that Sankaran played exactly what he meant to play in this circumstance.

DN: What I want to ask is, what is that

\[ \text{ta - - di - - tam - -} \]

doing in there? I'm not saying it's wrong, but you composed this, so I can ask you.

SS: Well, I consider that as a connector. It connects with the ideas I have been using up until then. And then what follows, for me the interest in creating this piece, to show the

\[ \text{ta din gi ηa tom} \]

coming at different places, and then the last time occurring on the beat, which is kind of a nice resolution—a relief, which also emphasizes the fact that I have been doing this piece in khaṇḍa gati. So there are two sets of patterns

---

18 The reader is invited to investigate Mani, cycles 102-104 for an example of on-the-spot ‘patching’.

19 Cycles 123-4
here. One is the phrase idea, the reduction on that one. And then the 'ta din gi ńa tom'.

**treatment**

The körvaśi is played the same way all three times (11:01, 11:18, 11:37), eduppu-to-eduppu, as if to support the conclusion of intentionality.

**return to caturaśra gati; cycle 73**

Sankaran returns to caturaśra gati by use of a common two-beat arudi (11:58):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{din ta } k & \ t \ t \ k \ (x=4) \\
\text{tam} & \ [y=2] \\
\text{din ta } k & \ t \ t \ k \ (x=4) \\
\text{tam} & \ [y=2] \\
\text{din ta } k & \ t \ t \ k \ (x=4)
\end{align*}
\]

---

\(^{20}\text{vol.2, p.276}\)
sarvalaghu and gumiki; cycles 73-79 (12:00)

The following section is made up entirely of material chosen for the beauty of its sound. The development proceeds according to a gradually increasing density of articulation.

In cycles 74-77 (12:14), the main pattern in use is

ta na ta di

In the second half of cycle 77 (12:42), the figure

ta din din na

is introduced. This pattern and its use with entirely gumiki left hand strokes evokes the traditional Hindustani ḍheka for tāntāl.

Cycles 79 and 80 consist of double-time sarvalaghu patterns of the following type:

\[ \text{t} \text{ṇ} \text{t} \text{ṇ} \text{j} \text{ṇ} \text{t} \text{ṇ} \text{j} \text{ṇ} \text{j} \text{ṇ} \text{n} \text{n} \text{n} \]

...That's part of what you might call the newer things. I was kind of alluding to an idea of my first teacher, Sri P.A. Venkataraman. I would say it has a certain bearing on listening to tabla. I wanted to comment because people might miss it. It goes by so quick, and it's in the transition between two naḍais, and they might think it's just another sarvalaghu pattern, or another flow pattern at the double tempo.
Some of the fingering I'm using is peculiar to my own playing. Especially in this country, where I am featured as a soloist, not necessarily in the South Indian musical context, I introduce many of these nuances. This has a certain affinity to the tabla style of playing, but on the valandalai—not just the gumiki. Most often people focus on the left hand—the bayan—but in this case it's the valandalai—to show the beauty of the tonal quality.  

change to tiśra gati; cycle 80  (13:08)

The change to tiśra gati is abrupt, in sharp contrast with the nearly seamless way Sankaran made the previous change to khaṇḍa gati.

sarvalaghu; cycles 80-84

By comparison with the preceding double speed caturaśra figures, the main tiśra pattern is quite spare:

lta - - - din - l- - na - - -

In cycle 82 (13:32) he introduces the suffix figure

ldin - ki ṭa ta ka ldi mi ta ka jo ṇu

---

[21:vol.2, p.280]
and in cycle 83 the next suffix:

|din - - - di - ltan g ḍ t k t r k ṭ t k

This phrase provides the material for the following caturaśra jāti mōrā, which is in a nested form similar to that of kōrvai 2. It is derived from the mōrā:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ta di tan g ḍ t k t r k ṭ t k (x=8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tan - gi ḍu [y=4]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ta di tan g ḍ t k t r k ṭ t k (x=8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tan - gi ḍu [y=4]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ta di tan g ḍ t k t r k ṭ t k (x=8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The present cadence is the same duration, and goes as follows:

mōrā; cycle 84

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ta di tan g ḍ t k t r k ṭ t k</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tan - gi ḍu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ta di tan g ḍ t k t r k ṭ t k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tan g ḍ t k t r k ṭ t k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tan g ḍ t k t r k ṭ t k</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kōrvai 4; cycles 94-96

The preparation for kōrvai 4 begins in cycles 86 (14:08). It is so elaborate that parts of it seem to have been composed, even though this is not the case.

Cycle 86 comprises repeated half-cycle units that share some aspects of their
treatment with the Palani Subramania Pillai composition analyzed above. Note that the second half of each line is similar in structure to the first, but lacks the initial syllable(s).

tam - - - tam - - - ki - ţa - ta - ka - di - na - din - - - {24}  
- - - tam - - - ki - ţa - ta - ka - jo - ſu - jo - ſu - {24}

ta ri gi ḗu tam - - - ki - ţa - ta - ka - di - na - din - - - {24}  
- - - tam - - - ki - ţa - ta - ka - jo - ſu - jo - ſu - {24}

Cycles 86 and 87 are composed entirely of these statements. Cycle 88 begins twice as fast as the preceding phrases (14:29).

    ta - ta - ki ţa ta ka di na din - {12}  
    - ta - ki ţa ta ka di na din - {12}

ta ka ta - ki ţa ta ka di na din - {12}  
    - ta - ki ţa ta ka di na din - {12}

t r g ţa - ki ţa ta ka di na din - {12}  
    - ta - ki ţa ta ka di na din - {12}
mōră

tam - ki ţa ta ka jo ſu (x=8) [y=0]  
tam - ki ţa ta ka jo ſu (x=8) [y=0]  
tam - ki ţa ta ka jo ſu (x=8)

The mōră is composed of three statements of a phrase that is usually associated with sarvalaghū patterns. However, it is repeated three times and resolves clearly on an eçuppu; it is therefore labeled, for the purposes of this
study, as a formal cadence. According to Sankaran, the formality of this section was not premeditated.²²

The phrases that begin the preparation in cycle 90 (14:50) bear a strong resemblance to those that made up cycles 86-88; again, half-cycle groups based on the opening phrase

\[
\begin{align*}
ta - ta - & \text{ ki } ta \text{ ta ka } jo \ nu \ di \ na - tom - ta \\
tam - & \text{ tam - di - - - - - - - - - -} \\
\{tam - tam - & \text{ di - - - - - - - - - -} \\
tam - & \text{ tam - di - - - } \}
\end{align*}
\]

are introduced, although not in half-time. The twenty-pulse bracketed section above is varied in the following ways through the next two cycles:

\[
\begin{align*}
\{ta - & \text{ din - ta - din - ta - din -} \\
ta - & \text{ din - ta - din - } \}
\end{align*}
\]

and

\[
\begin{align*}
ta \text{ na di na ta na di na ta na di na } \\
ta \text{ na di na ta na di na }
\end{align*}
\]

In cycle 93, the introductory figures are reduced so that the bracketed section is cut altogether.

²²vol.2, p.283
DN: ...That preparation is so beautiful. Is it again something spontaneous?

SS: Spontaneous, and I want to tell you something else there. That

\[ ta - ta - ta ri ta ka jo nu tam - \]
\[ - - ta - ta ri ta ka jo nu tam - \]

as a block, comes from my master. What I have done as a körvai and the extemporization, this is my own extension. This is an extension of that idea, but it's made into my own, and all that nuancing was mostly impromptu.

DN: I wondered about that. You've got this block set up over here, and then this other area...

SS: Where I can freely travel with the material and come back...²³

**structure**

Körvai 4 is in two parts; a gopucca reduction, followed by a simple mōrā, as follows:

²³op. cit.
The reduction is arithmetically orderly until the last stage, which, under purely arithmetical demands, would have to be four, rather than three pulses in duration. However, as we have seen previously, the phrases have their own demands for Sankaran, and it is to this sort of demand that the last line of the reduction owes its size.

SS: ...It's a mixture of arithmetic combined with the phrase shape. That's the aesthetic I see there.

DN: You couldn't have done anything else without hurting it.

SS: It's possible. I could have stopped after

\text{di na - din - gu}
and come up with something else, but I prefer it this way...like a logical order of reducing, and then all of a sudden taking a twist and following the phrase shape...\textsuperscript{24}

In order for the last line to be four pulses, the unsounded pulse preceding \texttt{tom - ta} would have to be articulated for the first time, after six lines in which it had been silent. The alternative would be to leave the unsounded pulse intact:

\texttt{\{-\} tom - ta}

The result would be the only line in the reduction not beginning with a sounded pulse, and a distortion of the momentum of the reduction.

One further choice exists; the removal of the last stage and the distribution of its three pulses throughout the m\texttt{\textdegree}r\texttt{\textdegree}. This solution, while arithmetically sound, would result in a m\texttt{\textdegree}r\texttt{\textdegree} made up entirely of six-pulse figures, all of which would coincide directly with hand gestures. This is the rhythmic equivalent of writing parallel octaves; it is considered boring, and therefore not permissible.

\textsuperscript{24}op. cit.
treatment

The ninety-six pulse körvai is played three times in tiśra gati (15:29, 15:38, 15:48); each statement fits eḻuppu-to-eḻuppu within one cycle of the tāla.

caturaśra sarvalaghu motif; cycles 97-102 (16:07)

The introduction of the caturaśra sarvalaghu figure

jo ṇu tan t r g ḍ ta jo ṇu

follows a common pattern; half-cycles in cycle 97, quarter-cycles in cycle 98, and then the full exposition (16:17-54).

|jo ṇu tan t r g ḍ ta ljo ṇu  
|jo ṇu tan t r lg ḍ ta jo ṇu  
|jo ṇu ltan t r g ḍ ta jo ṇu

Körvai 5; cycles 103-106

preparation

The caturaśra pattern notated above is played continuously until the beginning of the körvai, preparing the listener not only for the stroke patterns, but also for the caturaśra jāti nature of the composition.
structure

This kūrvaī is in two sections; the first is a four-stage gopucca reduction. The second is a simple mōrā; since the mōrā represents, phraseologically, the apparent fifth stage of the reduction, it is identifiable as a cadence only because its phrase is repeated three times:

tan g ḍ t k tom ḍ t t k
tan g ḍ t k tom ḍ t t k
ta ṇa ta ṇa ta din - gu ta - (22)

tan g ḍ t k tom k ḍ t t k
tan g ḍ t k tom k ḍ t t k
ta ṇa ta ṇa ta din - gu ta - (22)

tan g ḍ t k tom k ḍ t t k
ta ṇa ta ṇa ta din - gu ta - (16)

tan g ḍ t k tom k ḍ t t k
ta ṇa ta ṇa ta din - gu ta - (16)

ta ṇa ta ṇa ta din - gu ta - (10)
ta ṇa ta ṇa ta din - gu ta - (10)
ta ṇa ta din - gu ta - (8)

mōrā

ta din - gu (x=4)
  ta - [y=2]
ta din - gu (x=4)
  ta - [y=2]
ta din - gu (x=4)
Körvai 5 has similarities in structure with two preceding compositions. With körvai 2 it shares the organic generation of an entire composition from one phrase; it also shares the use of the phrase ‘ta ḏin - gu’ as the end of each line in the reduction and the ‘x’ in each mōrā. With körvai 3 it shares a style of reduction based on phrase shape rather than on abstract duration. The nature of the reduction may be clarified by examining the thematic components of the first section:

\[
tan \ g \ ḏt \ k \ tom \ k \ ṭt \ t \ k \ (6) \quad tan \ g \ ḏt \ k \ tom \ k \ ṭt \ t \ k \ (6)^{25}
\]

\[
ta \ ṇa \ (2) \ ta \ ṇa \ (2) \ ta \ din - gu \ (4) \ ta - (2)
\]

The breaks in the phrases represent the increments that are cut during the stages of the reduction; if the whole is now represented in graphic form,

---

\(^{25}\)Sankaran has in this case further divided the groups of six into three-pulse pairs; this is discretionary, and not a necessary feature of the composition.
If the stages of the reduction do not follow a strictly arithmetical progression, they do have an important relationship with the caturaśra jāti nature of the körvai. This relationship becomes clear at the end of the third stage, by which time the phrases total an even ninety-six pulses:

\[
[22+22] + [16+16] + [10+10]=96
\]

Stage 4 and the mārā comprise sixteen pulses each, so that the whole composition totals 128. In normal caturaśra gati this would mean that each repetition lasts two full cycles. As will be seen in the next section, this is not the context in which körvai 5 is set.

treatment

Sankaran plays this körvai three times in tiṣra gati (16:55, 17:08, 17:21), or twelve pulses per beat; each repetition takes ten and two-thirds beats. The demand is thus generated that he play the körvai three times, since the beginnings of the second and third repetitions not only do not coincide with the
cṅuppu), they do not coincide with the beginnings of any mātra at all.26 The phrase structure of the first line,

\begin{align*}
\text{tā nā tā nā tā dīn - gu ta - } & (6) \\
\text{tā nā tā nā tā dīn - gu ta - } & (10)
\end{align*}

makes it clear that, although the kūrvai is a caturaśra jāti composition, the first two six-pulse figures will fit neatly into one tiśra gati beat. At least at the beginning, then, the difficulty of performing kūrvai 5 in tiśra gati is alleviated somewhat.

One further aspect of Sankaran's treatment of this composition that deserves attention is the use of left hand patterns. In the first statement of each reductive phase all the left hand strokes are open, while in the second they are all closed; the first stage will be used as an example:

\begin{align*}
\text{tā nā tā nā tā dīn - gu ta - } & (N\ 3\ 1\ 3\ 3\ 3\ N\ 3\ 1\ 3\ 3\ 3\ N\ n\ N\ n\ N\ O\ C) \\
\text{tā nā tā nā tā dīn - gu ta - } & (O\ 0\ 0\ 0\ 0\ 0\ 0\ 0\ 0\ 0\ 0\ 0\ 0\ 0)
\end{align*}

26See also Murthy kūrvai 5. There is one other way the kūrvai could be approached in this context, viz. repetitions 2 & 3 could be played in slow tiśra (6/beat) and caturaśra (8/beat) respectively. This is the reverse of Ramabhadran's approach in kūrvai 3, and would have resulted in a seamless change to caturaśra; Sankaran's approach is by far the most common of the ways in which this kūrvai is used.
This simple device prevents any perception that lines are being repeated gratuitously; instead, a subtle and effective contrast is set up.

return to caturaśra gati; cycle 107-114

By use of a simple two-beat arudi to the middle of cycle 107 (17:35), Sankaran returns to caturaśra gati.

sarvalaghū

Before beginning the final section of his solo, Sankaran plays some more caturaśra jāti sarvalaghū patterns (17:38). First,

\[
\text{ta jo ŋu ta ŋa ta jo ŋu}
\text{ta ŋa ta jo ŋu tam k t t k}
\]

then a reprise of

\[
\text{ta ŋa ta di}
\]
followed by

\textit{ta jo ṇu ti}

with tiśra gati suffixes (18:29-45), and, finally, a tiśra gati mōrā in cycle 114 (18:46).

\textit{ta - ta ta ki ṭa ta ka jo ūnu ta ka (x=12)}
\textit{tam - - - - [y=6]}
\textit{ta - ta ta ki ṭa ta ka jo ūnu ta ka (x=12)}
\textit{tam - - - - [y=6]}
\textit{ta - ta ta ki ṭa ta ka jo ūnu ta ka (x=12)}

\textbf{Ending Section}

\textbf{parsans; cycles 115-119}

Sankaran keeps to his preferred course in this section, moving from less dense to more dense patterns. He begins with the following pattern in cycle 115 (18:56):

\textit{din - din k ūt k din - din -}

In cycles 116 and 117 (19:01), the dominant phrase is
din k t t k j n

and this is followed in cycle 118 (19:21) by

din - - t r k t t k
din - - t r k t t k
din - ta -
din - - t r k t t k
din - - t r k t t k
t k t r k t t k

and finally (19:31)

tan - k t t k t r k t t k
din - k t t k t r k t t k
t k t r k t t k

Long Mōrā and Final Koṟvai; cycles 120-125

Sankaran's long mōrā is evidently related to one used by Murthy and Ramabhadran. It makes use of the usual triple repetition of the 'A' line in order to generate a three-stage gopucca reduction:
Full Statement 1

\[ A_1 \text{ ta - di - ta lăn - gu ki ŭa ta ta ri ki ŭa tom - } \{9\} \]
\[ A_2 \text{ di - ta lăn - gu ki ŭa ta ta ri ki ŭa tom - } \{8\} \]
\[ A_3 \text{ ta lăn - gu ki ŭa ta ta ri ki ŭa tom - } \{7\} \]
\[ B_1 \text{ tom - ta - tom - - ta} \]
\[ B_2 \text{ tom - ta - tom - - } \{8\} \]

Full Statement 2

\[ A_1 \text{ ta - di - ta lăn - gu ki ŭa ta ta ri ki ŭa tom - } \{9\} \]
\[ A_2 \text{ di - ta lăn - gu ki ŭa ta ta ri ki ŭa tom - } \{8\} \]
\[ A_3 \text{ ta lăn - gu ki ŭa ta ta ri ki ŭa tom - } \{7\} \]
\[ B_1 \text{ tom - ta - tom - - ta} \]
\[ B_2 \text{ tom - ta - tom - - } \{8\} \]

Reduction 1

\[ A_1 \text{ ta - di - ta lăn - gu ki ŭa ta ta ri ki ŭa tom - } \{9\} \]
\[ A_2 \text{ di - ta lăn - gu ki ŭa ta ta ri ki ŭa tom - } \{8\} \]
\[ A_3 \text{ ta lăn - gu ki ŭa ta ta ri ki ŭa tom - } \{7\} \]
\[ B_2 \text{ tom - ta - tom - - } \{4\} \]

Reduction 2

\[ A_2 \text{ di - ta lăn - gu ki ŭa ta ta ri ki ŭa tom - } \{8\} \]
\[ B_2 \text{ tom - ta - tom - - } \{4\} \]

Reduction 3

\[ A_2 \text{ di - ta lăn - gu ki ŭa ta ta ri ki ŭa tom - } \{8\} \]
\[ \text{môrâ} \]
\[ \text{ta ka ta ri ki ŭa ta ka (x=4)} \]
\[ \text{tan - gi ëû [y=2]} \]
\[ \text{ta ka ta ri ki ŭa ta ka (x=4)} \]
\[ \text{tan - gi ëû [y=2]} \]
\[ \text{ta ka ta ri ki ŭa ta ka (x=4)} \]

One adjustment to the usual practice is made necessary by the redesigned first section. In reductions 2 and 3, ‘A2’ must be used as the theme line in order to preserve arithmetical symmetry; the usual practice would be to use ‘A3’. In
our second interview, Sankaran pointed out that the opening phrases of the long mōrā are thematically related with kōrvai 1.27

Final Kōrvai (19:59) structure

In the relationship between phrase structure and treatment, Sankaran's final kōrvais shares some important characteristics with kōrvai 5. Not only are both kōrvais composed in caturaśra jāti and played in tiśra gati; they also share opening phrases that fit perfectly into twelve-pulse beats, inviting the tiśra gati treatment. Finally, both kōrvais total 128 pulses.

section A
\[
ta - - - - - - - - \\
ta ki ūta ta ki ūta ta ki ūta ta ki ūta \{24\}
\]

section B
\[
ta - - - - - - \\
dim - - - - - - \{16\}
\]

section C
\[
ta - ki - ūta - \{6\}
\]

mōrā
\[
t \, r \, g \, ġ \, ta - ta \, di - ki \, ta \, to\, m - - (x=10) \,[y=2] \\
t \, r \, g \, ġ \, ta - ta \, di - ki \, ta \, to\, m - - (x=10) \,[y=2] \\
t \, r \, g \, ġ \, ta - ta \, di - ki \, ta \, to\, m \,(x=10)
\]

27 vol.2, p. 287
The structural analysis above is based on the phrase groupings. Section A and the móra are clear enough; the analysis becomes more complicated concerning sections B and C. As has been pointed out above, Sankaran's aesthetic notions do not demand purely arithmetical symmetry. In this case as in several of those preceding it, the job of reworking the körvai to generate such symmetry would be an easy one; as in those preceding cases, the result would likely involve some loss of phrase-generated beauty. Like a poem, a körvai is intended to be heard, and the logic of the ear will sometimes take precedence over the logic of the cerebrum. On the other hand, this is a final körvai; its use and treatment may be assumed to be completely deliberate. It deserves a closer look; not so much a reworking as a re-perceiving is in order.

Section A may be spoken of as three two-part twenty-four pulse groups, evenly divided as twelve and twelve in terms of pulse, but totally opposite in terms of density of articulation.

\[
ta - - - - - - - - - - ta ki ta ta ki ta ta ki ta ta ki ta
\]

---

28 See also Murthy, Mani, and especially Raghu's final körvais for further examples of the special consideration given to compositions in this position.
The first group is, except for the first syllable, entirely unarticulated. Since it is preceded by a caturaśra gati long mōrā, there is no way to tell until the second half of the phrase that a change of subdivision has taken place.29

Section B starts out as if it were to be the same, but instead of a twelve-pulse kārvai, there are two eight-pulse figures:

\[
\begin{align*}
ta & - - - - - - \\
\text{dim} & - - - - - - 
\end{align*}
\]

These are followed by the six-pulse Section C and the thirty-four pulse mōrā.

section C
\[
\begin{align*}
ta & - ki - ā - \{6\} \\
mōrā
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
t & r & g & ā & ta & - ta & di & - ki & ta & tom & - - & (x=10) & [y=2] \\
t & r & g & ā & ta & - ta & di & - ki & ta & tom & - - & (x=10) & [y=2] \\
t & r & g & ā & ta & - ta & di & - ki & ta & tom & (x=10)
\end{align*}
\]

This analysis accounts for all the arithmetic and phrases, but seems unnecessarily fragmented. If Section C is conceived as part of ‘B’, the latter now comprises twenty-two pulses:

\[
\begin{align*}
ta & - - - - - - \\
\text{dim} & - - - - - - \\
ta & - ki - ā - 
\end{align*}
\]

29See also Murthy, kōrvai 4, which is also shifted in the second and third repetitions. He uses it as a disguised transition to the tiśra gati section of his solo.
Now Sections A and B are nearly in balance, but one more step is required. If Section B were two pulses longer, it would have the same duration as each line of Section A, but the twenty-four pulses would be divided into three groups of eight rather than two groups of twelve. This analysis can be accomplished, provided one is willing to think of the first two pulses of the mūrā as having a double function, as follows:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{ta - - - - - - dim - - - - - ta - ki - ūa - t r g d} \\
\text{t r g d} \\
\text{t r g d}
\end{array}
\]

By this analysis there is no longer any fragmentation in the structure. Section B now bears a direct arithmetical and proportional relationship to Section A; at the same time, it elides seamlessly with the mūrā.

**treatment**

The final kūrvai is repeated three times in tiśra gati. Each repetition takes one and one-third cycles. It is one of Sankaran’s favorites:

**SS:** I would call this a gigantic kūrvai; very powerful, and very classic.\(^{30}\)

\(^{30}\text{vol.2, p.288}\)
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WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

MRDANGAM MIND:
THE TANI ĀVARTANAM IN KARNATAK MUSIC
VOLUME II: THE INTERVIEWS

by

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A dissertation in Music
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at
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1991
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INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME II

Volume II consists of edited transcripts of ten videotaped interviews, two with each of the five mṛdaṅgam players whose solos are analyzed in Volume I, Part Two. These are presented in two groups: the First Interviews, which preceded the performances of the solos, and the Second Interviews, which followed them.

With respect to content, the former group is generally biographical, while the second group focuses primarily on the actual solos. The reader is invited to enter this world anywhere s/he chooses. For the sake of consistency, the transcripts are arranged in the same order as the solos, analyses, and transcriptions. This order reflects the chronological order in which the interviews were conducted, but it has no other significance.

Especially in the First Interviews, I have made as little editorial comment as possible. At times it was necessary to add words in order that the meaning of a statement be intelligible to someone who was not in the room; these additions are always in parentheses. I have also left, as much as possible, the language of each drummer intact. I have changed tenses here and there, to avoid confusion with American English usage, but, in general, I have tried to treat Indian English as its own dialect.
With respect to the use of musical terms in Indian languages, I attempted to adapt my own use of these to that used by each drummer in turn. Most of the meanings will be clear from the context, although the lack of a standard terminology may cause occasional confusion for the non-expert. Whatever the differences, the five drummers in this study are not confused about the meanings of the terms, nor are they dogmatic about usage. The differences are acknowledged, and the discussion goes on.

Throughout the ten interviews, musical examples were demonstrated by means of solkaṭṭu, recited and counted, usually in oru kaḷai ādi tāḷa, even when the material being demonstrated was from the solo, which was in reṇḍu kaḷai. In addition, most examples were recited so that they resolved at the sama rather, than at the eḍuppu used in the solo. I have marked the beats in the transcribed examples accordingly. A bold vertical line, '‖', indicates a sama, while the same symbol in normal typeface indicates any other beat. As these were conversations rather than performances, not all the recited examples conformed rigorously with the tāḷa; thus the beat markings will be more useful in understanding the relationship of the pattern with akṣara structure than with the tāḷa structure.

In all the interviews I have represented the recited examples in a way that emphasizes their phrase organization. In the Second Interviews, examples from the solos are linked by time code indications with the tape, the analyses, and the transcriptions; any reader who wishes may examine these for representations based more closely on the tāḷa structure.
In an attempt to transcribe as faithfully as possible the actual pronunciation of syllables used by each drummer, I have included diacritical marks in the recited examples. Sollakku, as a language of the mrdanga, deserves to be pronounced accurately, and it is hoped that these marks will assist the reader in doing so.

RHYTHMIC VALUES

In this area I have departed somewhat from the usual practice in the interest of keeping all the beats approximately the same size. Underlining phrases to indicate doubling of tempo is not used; instead, the following conventions apply:
Unit time, or pulse-level articulation, is represented by a consonant followed by a vowel; thus the phrase

\[ \text{ta ka di mi} \]

comprising four pulses, can occupy one mātra—one beat in oru kaḷai in caturaśra gati. Double time is represented by removing the vowels and removing half the space among syllables, as follows:

\[ \text{t k d m t k d m} \]

One further doubling is possible if all spaces are removed:

\[ \text{tkdm tkdm tkdm tkdm} \]

A short dash (⁻) following a syllable lengthens its duration by one syllable. To continue with the same example, the following four speeds may all be said to occupy two mātras: one beat in reṇḍu kaḷai in caturaśra gati.

\[ \text{ta - ka - di - mi -} \]

\[ \text{ta ka di mi ta ka di mi} \]

\[ \text{t k d m t k d m t k d m} \]

\[ \text{tkdm tkdm tkdm tkdm} \]
PLEASE NOTE

Page(s) missing in number only; text follows.
Filmed as received.

University Microfilms International
VELLORE G. RAMABHADRAN
FIRST INTERVIEW: NOVEMBER 28, 1987

DN: We’re at 12 South Chitrakulam Street in Mylapore, Madras, and we’re at the home of Mr. Vellore Ramabhadrnan.

We’re going to be talking about Mr. Ramabhadrnan’s conception of the tani āvarthanam, but before that there are all kinds of other questions I want to ask as long as I have you here sitting in front of the video camera. I’d like to start with basic information about you. For example, when were you born?

GR: I was born in 1930—4/8.

DN: August 4th? and where?

GR: In Vellore.

DN: Is your family still in Vellore?

GR: Not now. Up to ‘44 we lived in Vellore, then we settled in Madras—in this Mylapore.

DN: You’ve lived in Mylapore since 1944? Did you start to learn mṛdaṅgam in Vellore itself? or after you came to Madras?

GR: In Vellore. I started from my eighth year. Twelfth year my first (concert) with Madurai Mani Iyer.

DN: That was your arangetram?

GR: Yes, arangetram, in Madras, at the Jagannatha Bhakta Sabha. First Madurai Mani Iyer, then Aryakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, Flute Mahalingam...

DN: So you had your arangetram after four years of study?
GR: Yes.

DN: Who was your teacher?

GR: My father.

DN: He was your only teacher?

GR: Yes. He was a great konakkol vidvan

DN: What was his name?

GR: Vellore Gopalacharya. He is a disciple of Kanchipuram Nayana Pillai.

DN: I take it that your father is no more.

GR: No more.

DN: When did he die?

GR: ’71.

DN: How many years did you actually take lessons with him?

GR: Four, five years. My childhood, beginning (at) about three years (of age), I will beat on things (like) this bureau, so he (noticed) my interest in music, and brought me up (taught me).

DN: So he played mṛdaṅgam well enough to teach...

GR: He played mṛdaṅgam, kanjira, konakkol—this solkattu...

DN: Was he a performer also?

GR: Yes, he performed with Aryakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavatar...

DN: As a konakkol artist?
GR: Konakkol. With Palghat Mani Iyer, Tanjore Vaidyanatha Iyer, Palani Subramania Pillai. In those days konakkol was an art. Nowadays there is no support. In those days it was full bench—violin, mṛdaṅgam, kanjira, morsing, konakkol, dholak. We called it as ‘full bench’ The tani āvartanam took one or two hours. Duration of the program also was six-and-half hours. They would start by four o’clock—in Hindu mythology, they start before rāghuṅkālam. Naturally, program comes Sundays—Sunday, 4:30 to 6 is rāghuṅkālam, so they would commence 4:15. The kacceri would go six hours.

DN: But people came and went—they didn’t sit there for six hours?

GR: Yes. Those days, not a big crowd, maybe two hundred fifty, three hundred people. They are all art-loving, music-loving people—they would sit.

DN: This was their Sunday activity.

GR: Yes. Nowadays, you know, so many (other) things (to do). kacceri two, two-and-half hours.

DN: So you grew up listening to all these concerts...

GR: And also I had some experiences—my father was the Secretary of Vellore Sangita Sabha.

DN: So you heard everybody.

GR: From 1926 up to 1944 he ran the sābhā. It was a big hall (it had its) own premises. So all the vidvāns came there. Balasaraswati danced there. Like that I heard Tanjore Vaidyanatha Iyer, Dakshinamurthy Pillai—they died in my young age—I don’t remember how they played. I heard only Palghat Mani Iyer, Palani Subramania Pillai—so many great vidvāns. (In the concerts) I will only see (pay attention to) the mṛdaṅgam. So naturally my father taught me this mṛdaṅgam.

DN: Did he teach you every day?
GR: Every day eight hours practice. Early morning I (would) wake up 4 o'clock—up to seven (I would practice). Then took some idli, then practice—then one hour rest, then practice—three hours. Then we took our meals—lunch.

DN: What about school?

GR: School, 10 to 4:30. After school, from 7 to 9:30 or 10, again practice.

DN: So your life was only practice and school?

GR: Yes, practice.

DN: How did he teach you? Was there a time when he would sit and teach, or would you practice, and he would come into the room and say, “Play this one”?

GR: He will give the lessons—“Today you will finish these lessons.” So I practice, and he will go out and hear. “It’s not good. Another practice (practice it some more)” Like this, until they come perfectly, he will do.

DN: One thing at a time. Can you give an example of one of his lessons?

GR: First lesson he taught me in my childhood, eight years (of age)
like this So many schools (have their own) variations—Dakshinamurthy’s school, Palani Subramania Pillai’s school, Palghat Mani Iyer’s school—different solkaṭṭu for these beginning lessons.
DN: And you would do that until you mastered each lesson. He must also have given you ṭekas...

GR: Yes, ṭeka, but first, he gave this kālapramanam—this meter. Without meter, there is no use mṛdaṅgam.

DN: True. Who provided the tāḷam for you when you were practicing?

GR: My father.

DN: He would sit and put the tāḷam while you practiced?

GR: Yes. First I would tell in konakkoḻ (recite the pattern), then I will play. In those days there is no metronome, so if there is some improvisation, some kalpana, (I will think) “Oh, this is the kālapramanam”, so I will put it with my leg.

DN: You used to keep it with your legs?
GR: In my early age, sarvalaghuh was perfect. It was easy for me to follow all lessons—from the meter point of view.

DN: Because you were able to put the tālam with your foot?

GR: Yes, for all tālas. This is the main (thing).

DN: So you were taught like that from the beginning...

GR: Yes. Then, how to accompany for kīrtanas...

DN: Who taught you that? your father?

GR: He was also a singer; a vocal artist also.

DN: He would sing for you.

GR: Yes. He will sing some kīrtana; I will play.

DN: And by that method he could tell you exactly...

GR: Yes. In those days, how to play pallavi—you know, three; pallavi, anupallavi, caranam. How to play pallavi, then anupallavi—caranam. First the slow tempo, then second kāla for anupallavi; caranam, just a little faster, that’s all. Then you come back to the original (kāla). In those days for mṛdaṅgam accompanying a vocalist, (these are) the rules. You should boost the vocalist’s tempo. Without mṛdaṅgam there is no synchronizing. If the vocalist has got a strong mṛdaṅgist, the kaccheri will click. Weak mṛdaṅgam, the tempo is not good—in our Karnāṭak system. So like this he will teach; how to play pallavi, anupallavi, caranam.

DN: Would you say that you follow the kālaprāmanam first, or the sāhitya first, or the tālam first?

GR: In mṛdaṅgam only kālaprāmanam: no words; only rhythm.

DN: Yes, but you know some people follow the text very closely.
GR: Yes, yes, you synchronize with the vocalist—you follow the vocalist more. That is the mṛdaṅgam’s problem (function). That is the only thing; to do like this—it’s not singing. If you play without vocalist, what is the meaning? No ‘Endaro mahanubhavulu’, nothing. During the solo, the tānī, he will show his improvising ability...

DN: But not during the music.

GR: Then only accompaniment—you boost them. Team spirit—vocalist, violinist, and mṛdaṅgist.

DN: Did your father teach you all the gumikis that you play?

GR: Yes; gumiki is very fundamental for mṛdaṅgam. If you beat, it’s a jarring sound. Sometimes you beat. But, (recites gumiki pattern) this is gumiki.

DN: Did he teach you by using his voice like that?

GR: Voice, and also showing his hand, how to get the sound. He knew it all.

DN: Now my guess is that as far as what you play with your right hand, you probably follow pretty closely what you were taught—the phrases, the fingerings, the sounds and all that. Do you find that the use of the left hand is a little more individual? What I’m asking you is, you must have developed your own gumiki, more than right hand patterns. Is that true?

GR: Yes, yes. gumiki point of view, I love Palani’s style. Because he is left hander; right hand gumiki.

DN: What difference does that make?

GR: The right hand is (more) powerful.

DN: I heard somebody else say that, and it’s a theory I’ve never heard before. Why do you think the right is more powerful?

GR: Anything you do, it’s stronger.
DN: But you're a right-handed person.

GR: Not only me, generally speaking. Right hand is more powerful than left hand, from mṛdāṅgam point of view. Somehow, I don't know, by God's blessing Palani's left hand is strong also—from gumiki point of view, Palani's gumiki was very powerful. Mani Iyer himself would accept (the fact) “You see Palani's gumiki.” That's what he would say.

DN: Mani Iyer's contribution was a little different.

GR: With Mani Iyer's era, the mṛdāṅgam world went through a complete change—a revolution.

DN: Talk to me about that.

GR: Previously, the mṛdāṅgam player would simply keep quiet, no matter what. He introduced new life; follow the vocalist. Like the vocal, he will produce the mṛdāṅgam (sound). All audiences were thrilled with Mani Iyer. Whoever he accompanied, GNB, Sembangudi, Ramanuja Iyengar—he followed the vocalist's mood with the mṛdāṅgam. It was like another vocal; sort of a melody, rhythm, and a grasping mind. Whatever they do he will grasp it on the spot.

DN: Yes, he was fantastic in that way.

GR: No doubt. There is no two opinions. So many patterns changed with Mani Iyer. Nowadays all, including myself (are playing) so many varieties

\[ \text{tam - - di ta ka din - din - din - tam - -} \]

this is Mani Iyer's contribution.

DN: I've heard Palani Subramania Pillai play that one—maybe he got it from Palghat Mani Iyer...
GR: Yes, so many concerts they used to play double mṛdaṅgam, and Palani Subramania Pillai used to play kanjiṟa also.

DN: I imagine a lot of things went back and forth.

GR: Yes, yes.

DN: You’ve said everything changed with Palghat Mani Iyer. What was it like before?

GR: Previously, this\(^1\) they will not accept. It is not lessons. You should play only\(^2\)—this is orthodox view. You should not play like the song. Palani will always play (ṭeḵa). But this Mani Iyer style the older generation will never accept.

DN: But they would accept Palani’s style?

GR: Yes. He would play ṭeḵa for anything. But Mani Iyer adopted both systems. He wanted some change. But the conservative type never accepted (him). Mani Iyer’s style only suited him. If you adapt it, you will fail. He played both systems; ṭeḵa system, and like the vocal. Don’t compare with other vidvans—he is a big Himalayan (mountain). He would do things, and undo things. Undo things means, if he’s not interested he will simply keep quiet (stop playing).

DN: When you were growing up as a boy, and taking lessons from your father, and going to concerts; now this was before Mani Iyer, with the full bench...

GR: I have not seen.

DN: You haven’t seen the full bench? You only heard about it?

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\(^1\)Sings first line of aṭa tāḷa Vanajakshi, then recites accompaniment accenting with the text

\(^2\)Recites madhyama kāḷa ṭeṅka
GR: Heard about it.

DN: What was the solo like before Mani Iyer?

GR: Little bit, that’s all. Only with Dakshinamurthy Pillai and Mani Iyer tani āvartanam will be forty minutes minimum. My father says, before Mani Iyer, no necessity tani āvartanam. (laughs) In those days no violin. Only flute or vīṇa accompanied the vocalist.

DN: What about ālāpana, niraval, svarakalpana...

GR: Within seventy-five, eighty years ālāpana, and svaras. The mathematical calculation these Alathur Brothers.

DN: At that time the mṛdaṅgam was already starting...


DN: It’s role in the ensemble?

GR: Yes. That is Mani Iyer’s guru, Tanjore Vaidyanatha Iyer. He has contributed (to this change). How to play like this, he (would) teach a lesson to Palghat Mani Iyer. Then he (Palghat Mani Iyer) (made a) revolution. If Tanjore Vaidyanatha Iyer plays the same it is not good, my father says. But Mani Iyer plays...

DN: So before Mani Iyer, the solo was not very important, but nowadays it’s extremely important.

GR: Oh, now! The younger generation are fantastic.

DN: When you were studying, was the tani āvartanam important?

GR: Yes. After Mani Iyer came to the field, tani āvartanam was important.
DN: So by the time you were learning, he was already performing and well-known.

GR: Yes.

DN: So he had already had his effect. When your father was teaching you, did he teach you möräs and körvais and all those things?

GR: Yes.

DN: Can you give me an example of a körvāj your father taught you?

GR: I will tell a simple one, sarvalaghù and tiśram

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{hta} & - \text{ha ta ljem} - \text{ta ri hta} - \\
& \text{ta ljem} - \text{ta ri hta} - \text{ta ka} \\
& \text{hta di mi ta lka ta ki ta hta ki} \\
& \text{ta ka di ku} - \text{ta kdi ki ta tom} \\
& \text{hta ka di ku} - \text{ta di ki hta tom} \\
& \text{ta ka di ku} - \text{ta kdi ki ta tom} \\
& \text{tiśram (slow)} \\
& \text{hta} - \text{ha ha ljem} - \text{hta ri ta l} - \\
& \text{ta ljem} - \text{ta lri ta} - \text{hta ka} \\
& \text{ta kdi mi ta lka ta ki lta ta ki} \\
& \text{hta ka di lku} - \text{ta kdi ki ta tom} \\
& \text{ta ka kdi ku} - \text{hta di ki hta tom} \\
& \text{ta lka di ku} - \text{ta di lki ta tom} \\
& \text{tiśram (fast)} \\
& \text{hta} - \text{ha ta ljem} - \text{hta ri ta} - \\
& \text{ta ljem} - \text{ta ri ta} - \text{hta ka} \\
& \text{ta di mi ta lka ta ki ta ta ki} \\
& \text{hta ka di ku} - \text{ta kdi ki ta tom} \\
& \text{ta ka kdi ku} - \text{ta di ki hta tom} \\
& \text{hta ka di ku} - \text{ta di ki ta tom [ta]}
\end{align*}
\]
DN: I find that very interesting; if you do that körvai three times in caturaśra, it will take the same number of beats.

GR: This only for sama—in ādi tāḷam. Not for arāṇī (half); this tiśra will not suit. If you adjust, this is your brilliance, but from mathematics point of view, I think it's bad. In chauka kāḷa for sama and arāṇī, but not for mukal. Mathematics point of view, that does not suit. If you adjust, that adjustment is another thing. Eight and four, twelve—that is mathematics. If you adjust eleven, that is your ability, but from the mathematics point of view, it is very bad—my father says. If it is done correctly, then it's correct.

DN: But Mani Iyer would play tiśram for kāḷ and mukal iḍāṁ, so that's another thing that has changed.

GR: Yes, that is adjustment.

DN: Am I to understand that if you're playing for mukal iḍāṁ you won't do that?

GR: No, no. Audience, 99% they won't understand—"Oh, fine". But mathematics point of view, it's not correct. It is not accepted by all vidvāns; it is my personal feeling. My father says if you apply kaṇṭakku (calculation) it should come correct. If you adjust, it is your ability; that is another—mathematics point of view it's bad. Some tāḷas will suit; some tāḷas will not suit.3 So many vidvāns will play. It is adjustment. From ear point of view, all rasikas will appreciate.

DN: Well, let me ask you this, then. If you're going to play a tani āvartanam, for example tomorrow you're going to play in an ādi tāḷa kṛti with a mukal iḍāṁ, do you think about that tani āvartanam ahead of time? The day before, for example, are you thinking, 'I'd like to play this thing'?

GR: No, I'm not. What I think on that moment I will play.

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3Recites, using miśra cāpu and khaṇḍa cāpu as examples of tāḷas not appropriate for tiśra gati.
DN: You don't think about it at all. Do you compose körvais?

GR: Recently I have composed two 'ta tom' körvais—only 'ta tom' (recites)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ita tom} & \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ltom} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ltom} \\
& \quad \text{Ita} \quad \text{ltom} \\
& \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ltom} \\
& \quad \text{k tt k lt r k tt to}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta ltom} & \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ltom} \\
& \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ltom} \\
& \quad \text{Ita} \quad \text{ltom} \\
& \quad \text{k tt k tt tt to}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta ltom} & \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ltom} \\
& \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ltom} \\
& \quad \text{Ita} \quad \text{ltom} \\
& \quad \text{k tt k tt tt to}
\end{align*}
\]

Like this.

DN: Will you play the whole thing three times?

GR: Just one time. (Three times) will bore the audience. So I will take this way.

DN: Do you ever use a körvai that doesn't start from the iḍam?

GR: Yes.

DN: So if I have a twenty-one beat körvai and I do it three times it's sixty-three beats; I have to start on the second beat of the tâla, and that's okay with you.
GR: Okay. Simplicity—I don’t want to tax the audience. I will play only sukhabhavam\(^4\) first—my point of view. I will play the whole time for sukhabhavam. But I love these kaṇakku. Yes, his guru T.K.Murthy (points at videographer J. Vaidyanathan) he is the doyen of all. I love (his playing). His teka—how to boost the kīrtana; his ṭeka is fantastic. Then Palghat Raghu, Karaikudi Mani, Sivaraman. This younger generation so many doing mathematics, calculations—very fine.

DN: When I think of kaṇakku I also think of naḍais...

GR: Oh, yes. So many naḍais—nowadays naḍais will not come; only kōrvais. See, this\(^5\) is all gone with Palani. Now it’s all very fast, but the vocalist will develop a fear complex. This is my view.

DN: When you’re not playing—let’s say sitting at home, and you think about mṛdaṅgam patterns, how do you think about them? Do you listen to something you can hear in your mind?

GR: Yes, yes. Always

DN: What do you hear? Do you hear the mṛdaṅgam? or do you hear the solkaṭṭu?

GR: First, nādam—that mṛdaṅgam nādam—nādam means sound. Then, kālāpramanam (recites/sings)

DN: But now you’re speaking in syllables.

GR: Then that solkaṭṭu.

DN: Then that comes.

\(^4\)Skt. “comfortable feeling”

\(^5\)Recites steady, comfortable sarvalaghu pattern.
GR: Then how to play that (some) kīrtana. (sings) That solkaṭṭu is very important—(recites an accompaniment) I have heard that Palani.

DN: Do you ever think about mṛdaṅgam patterns apart from thinking about the song? Lying in bed at night, do mṛdaṅgam sounds come to you?

GR: Mṛdaṅgam sounds come to me, and vocal also comes to me. I love vocal. Because for so many vidvāns I have played; this is the sixth generation. So I know all the kṛtis; not these modern ones; old generation kṛtis. If any kṛtis they sing, I apply my mind—on the spot (sings, recites) my mind goes in that older generation—Palghat Mani Iyer, Palani Subramania Pillai, how they will play. How far it is possible for me, I will play. Some people say “I play everything like this” (ring finger) some that (middle finger) I use both; some vidvāns will not accept (the legitimacy of it) but sound point of view, very fine.

DN: Would you be able to write that down, what you do with these other fingers?

GR: What are you asking me?

DN: You are able to write down your solkaṭṭu—if you think of a pattern, you are able to write it?

GR: Not write. Only in my mind.

DN: But you could, right?

GR: No.

DN: You don’t write it at all?

GR: From my beginning, no writing. Just what I am thinking on that day.

DN: You don’t write anything down? How about for your students? If a student comes to you?
GR: The first lessons I will not teach. They can go to any vidvan. Then how to play pallavi, anupallavi, caranam—like this I will teach. ‘You play, I will hear, I will rectify.’ That’s all. I will not take any students like this (beginners).

DN: So you don’t even bother with beginners.

GR: Because, if I show them how to put the finger, it will spoil their career. So I send them to T.K.Murthy, or Kumbakonam Ayappa; they will teach how to put ‘ta, di, tom, nam’.

DN: And they’ll write all the lessons down.

GR: Yes, yes.

DN: But you don’t write anything down. But in your mind you have the solkaṭṭu going, and you know which fingerings go with which syllables. If a student gets it from you, he might write it down?

GR: Oh, yes.

DN: How will the student know which strokes go with which syllables? He just has to know that...

GR: Know that. But I know my lessons, that’s all.

DN: Nowadays you must know that people write down everything.

GR: Yes, yes. In fact, all vidvans will tell like this (ask their students to write) but I will not.

DN: You don’t work like that. So if a student comes to you, it’s for learning to accompany the songs...

GR: Advanced studies. Pallavi, anupallavi, how to give the gumiki, how to produce that fast solkaṭṭu, like this I will tell. I will perfect all the (elements)—typical. But to explain the basics is very important—‘ta ta, di di’ (etc) then you come to me, let us see. Naturally, that is the foundation. So I will tell
(them about) so many vidvans, they will teach very fine. Then I will perfect all tāḷams; how to play pallavi, anupallavi, caranam.

DN: When you're sitting on the stage playing your solo, how do you know when it's time to stop?

GR: I know. My solo only mṛdaṅgam (no other percussion) just ten minutes.

DN: And you can tell when ten minutes are up?

GR: If it's a very first-class audience, then five minutes more. In my solo I will play within eight to ten minutes; that's all. If there is gaṭam also, then fifteen, twenty minutes.

DN: You must have a sense then, of what are the essential features of the solo. What are those?

GR: Hearing point of view first; (the sound comes first) hearing the audience (how it sounds to the audience). So, melody—sarvalaghu solkaṭṭu, then some tiśram, or for another program, some miśram, or khaṇḍam, like this I will bifurcate.

DN: How will you finish your caturaśram and begin your tiśram?

GR: Like this, then some sarvalaghu six minutes—solkaṭṭu.

DN: If I had to put into words what you just did, I'd say you played a teka; at the end of a cycle you introduce a phrase, then you introduce the phrase at the end of every half-cycle, then you make a körvai or a mōrā...

GR: Mōrā; first mōrā, then körvai.

DN: You have introduced the phrase, and you build the mōrā from that.

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6Recites beginning of solo, including the first long mōrā he plays the next day; transition to tiśram is directly after the mōrā, without arudi.
GR: Yes.

DN: And the kōrvai, you don't make that up on the spot.

GR: Yes, not on the spot. I know.

DN: So your feeling about the solo, if I can summarize it briefly, is that there are certain essential features that have to be there, and for you, they involve the following things; first of all, it should not disturb the music. It should not test the audience, it should not take too much time. But within that, if we were to talk technically, would you say that you start the solo the way your father suggested starting the pallaḷḷi with slow ṭeka, and that the anupallavī corresponds to the middle of the solo, and the caranam to the end? I never thought of this before, but it seems to me that the structure of the solo is related to the structure of the kṛti...

GR: No. (then, after some consultation with Padmini) Yes.
I- din - kdin - na -
I- din - kdin - na -
I- din - kdin - na -
Ita ta din - kdin - na -
Kdin - ki ta Ita ka din - I- din - Itam - k t t k
Kdin ta ka din Ita ka din - I- din - na Itam - - -
I- - - ta Ita ka din - I- din - Itam - k t t k
Kdin ta ka din Ita ka din - I- din - na Itam - - -
I- - - ta Ita ka din - I- din - Itam - - -
I- ta ta Ita ka din - I- din - Itam - - -
I- ta ta Ita ka din -
Ita ta ta ka kdin -
ta ta Ita ka din -
Ita ta ta ka kdin -
ta ta Ita ka din -
Kdin - ki ta Ita ka din - I- din - Itam - k t t k
Itam k t t k tr k t t k tam lk t t k t r k t Itam - - -
DN: I'll be there. Before we finish, you have written this beautiful statement, and I would appreciate it if you would read it for the tape so that we have a record of it.

GR: Yeah, I will do like this—simply.

DN: Everything is there.

GR: It's a sample; I will not prolong like this (in a concert). Then some sarvalaghru, some last (paraus), then (big) mura, kuryai, that's all. I will play tomorrow.

DN: This is what you call laya vinyasa.

GR: Then.

DN: mi ka ta din - ki mi di mi ka ta din -

GR: di mi ka ta din - ki mi di mi ka ta din -

DN: di mi ka ta din - ki mi di mi ka ta din -

GR: di mi ka ta din - ki mi di mi ka ta din -

DN: di mi ka ta din - ki mi di mi ka ta din -

GR: di mi ka ta din - ki mi di mi ka ta din -

DN: di mi ka ta din - ki mi di mi ka ta din -
GR: (reads) ‘Vellore Ramabhadran Interpretations’ About my style: As per my guru, that is my father’s teaching, I usually try to produce soft and soothing sounds from my instrument without intruding on the main performer’s way of singing either with hard strokes or beats or with complex arithmetical manipulations to outwit the musician in any way. I can boldly say not only I try to accompany with the utmost sincerity towards the main artist, but I also don’t know the many kinds and ways of tricky mathematical manipulations to outwit the main performer. I strictly follow my father’s teachings, which follow the soft and soothing stalwart Areganambi Pillai. In between kritis, extempore svara renderings, I try to produce pure sarvalaghu patterns of jatis which do not obstruct the main performer’s efforts.

On the solo side also I try to reduce my given time to the minimum to make the audience feel for me some longing gesticulation. To this day my pattern of playing is getting ovation from the audience, and even from the more laya-oriented musicians as well. In short, I prefer to be a practical, smooth player rather than to be named as a virtuosic percussionist.

DN: Is there anything else you want to go on record as saying while we’re here?

GR: I have said everything.

DN: I am grateful to you for taking the time, and for opening up your mind and your heart as you have, and I’m looking forward to the performance tomorrow.

GR: Thank you.
T. K. Murthy

First Interview: December 1, 1987

DN: Today we will interview Dr. T.K. Murthy, who is a world-renowned master of the mṛdaṅgam and konakkol, and nowadays I hear he is also playing the tavil.

TKM: I know tavil.

DN: You know, but you won't play it in a concert...

TKM: I wouldn't play a concert.

DN: But he is a master of all the South Indian percussive arts, he is a contemporary of the great Palghat Mani Iyer, and a fellow student of the same teacher. We're going to be talking with him with the help of his granddaughter Hemlata, who I think is going to be bearing a large burden today. I'll start with some general questions, if I may. Where were you born?

TKM: I was born in Neyyatinkara, in Kerala. It's on the road from Trivandrum to Nagercoil.

DN: That's the town, and what day?

TKM: 1924, August thirtieth.

DN: Then you've had your sixty-third year?

TKM: Sixty-four.

DN: So you were born in 1924 in Kerala; at what age did you begin to study mṛdaṅgam?

TKM: That was when I was six. That is, I showed I had a taste for it. It made me happy to hear it, so I told my mother I wanted a small mṛdaṅgam.
DN: Were your family members musicians?

TKM: Yes—my father’s grandfather, my grandfather, father, myself. All were musicians. They were Trivandrum palace vidvans.

DN: What was his name?

TKM: Father’s name Tanu Bhagavatar; grandfather, Subramania Bhagavatar, my father’s grandfather, Tanu Bhagavatar.

DN: So at the age of six, who was your first teacher?

TKM: My brother, Gopalakrishnan.

DN: Your brother played mrdanga?

TKM: He played. He taught me for one year, from six to seven. When I was seven, I played a concert. I played small concerts all around. I played for harikatha. I played for that from about seven to eight, but I had a desire to study properly. Not only that, I had a desire to study with Tanjore Vaidyanatha lyer.

DN: Who suggested that you study with him?

TKM: I heard his playing and wanted to study with him. Then, once he came to Trivandrum to play a concert. After that concert was finished, there was to be a harikatha performance, with me on the mrdangam. He said to me, “Are you going to play mrdangam for that?” “Yes, I’m the one”, I said. He tuned the mrdangam and gave it to me, and sat right under the stage for my concert. I played a small solo. When he heard that, he went to my father-in-law—he wasn’t my father-in-law yet, of course—and asked him to get a small silk shawl. When he gave it to him, he put it around my neck and said, “Let him come with me, I want to teach him.” My father and oldest brother were sitting there, and I didn’t know what to say, I was so happy. My father said, “If you want to teach him, we are very happy.” So the next day I went with him. Then we went to Tanjore.
DN: When you went to Tanjore, did you stay in the master's house?

TKM: Yes, in the master's house. On the day when my father, brother, and I arrived there, Palghat Mani Iyer was there.

DN: He was already there, staying in that house? How old was he then?

TKM: Twenty.

DN: By that time he was already playing very well...

TKM: Yes, he was playing all the concerts. He was there for further studies. He would go out to play concerts, then come back again to study.

DN: Whenever he was not out playing concerts he was there in that house. Was there any work for you there? Did you work in the house?

TKM: Everybody who was a student worked, but I didn't have to work when I was newly there. At first I didn't eat there; for two or three months I was eating in hotels, but it would get dark when I was coming back at night. There were no electric lights, and I would carry a small oil lamp. When he found that out he said, "No, don't you go to the hotel; you eat in this house." Then, I used to curl up just anywhere on the floor to sleep, but after six months my teacher or his wife used to carry me to his own room to sleep.

DN: Did your teacher have his own sons and daughters?

TKM: No. He wanted to adopt me.

DN: How long did you live there?

TKM: Until I was twenty-three. I went there at nine, and lived there until twenty-three.

DN: At that time, did you have lessons every day?
TKM: Daily. And from my tenth year, I had many concerts—almost daily. Palghat Mani, myself, double mṛdaṅgam, or Palghat Mani Iyer played kanjīra and I played mṛdaṅgam. Then my teacher and I would play double mṛdaṅgam. (We had concerts with) Musiri Subramania Iyer, Ramanuja Iyengar, Sennangudi Srinivasa Iyer, and Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavatar.

DN: When you were taking lessons with your teacher, did you ever write anything down?

TKM: He used to say we shouldn't write anything.

DN: But it was possible—he didn't want you to write?

TKM: He said we shouldn't, that we should keep it in the mind.

DN: You knew how.

TKM: I knew, and I wrote down some of his mōrās. He didn't know, but I wrote them and kept them.

DN: Nowadays when you teach, do your students write down their lessons?

TKM: Oh, yes.

DN: You started playing concerts at the age of ten—did you stay in your teacher's house until you were married?

TKM: After marriage also I stayed for three years. Palghat Mani Iyer also did the same; he lived on one side of the house, we lived on the other.

DN: For you and Palghat Mani Iyer to study with this man for twenty years or more, he must have been a very great teacher.

TKM: Thank you. In those days, every day ten or fifteen people would come to study with him.

DN: And nobody was writing anything down?
TKM: No, but if one of them forgot something, they would ask me and I would tell them; if I forgot something, I would ask them. But those students (the ones who weren't living there) would write and keep the lessons.

DN: When you were learning, did you learn that each sol was one movement of the hand? or could a syllable have more than one possible fingering?

TKM: It could be many movements. But there's only one 'nam'.

DN: That's a different matter. I'm asking about patterns like

\[ \text{ta ka ta ri ki } \text{ta ta ka} \]

TKM: For 'ta ka ta ri ki ta ta ka' you can do it two ways; with arai cāpu,\(^1\) or on the black.\(^2\) You can do it this way, or that way.

DN: According to what's appropriate, or to what they're able to do at a given speed?

TKM: According to what is possible. If this way is not possible, then it can be that way.

DN: You can say that for a given set of solkaṭṭu, there are several possible ways to play it, depending on what's musically appropriate, and what you're able to do with your fingers. They'd all be expressed with the same solkaṭṭu.

TKM: Right. I'll tell you one:

\[ \text{ki } \text{ta ta ka ta ri ki } \text{ta tom} \]

---

\(^1\)This is our 'di ku ta ka ta ri gi ḍu'

\(^2\)Referring to the second 'ta'; our 'ta ka ta ri ki ta ta ka'
There are four varieties, but one sol.³ This one (picks one of the four) is

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
\text{ki} & \text{ta} & \text{ka} & \text{ta} & \text{ri} & \text{ki} & \text{ta} & \text{tom} \\
3 & 1 & A & x & 3 & 1 & 0
\end{array}
\]

DN: But you say 'ki ta ta ka ta ri ki ta ta tom'. So it's possible to say it literally if necessary. There's a difference between what you speak and what you play.

TKM: Yes, there's a difference.

DN: This is mṛdaṅgam, that is konakkol.

TKM: We speak what sounds beautiful.⁴ This is

\[
\text{ta ta cha ta ki ta ta ka}
\]

If you say it, the sound is not good. If you say 'ta ka ta ri ki ta ta ka' it sounds nice. These ways of speaking mṛdaṅgam syllables come from the Tanjore Brothers, from many years ago. They settled all these solkaṭṭus:

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
\text{ta} & \text{ka} & \text{ta} & \text{ri} & \text{ki} & \text{ta} & \text{ka} \\
\text{ki} & \text{ta} & \text{ka} & \text{ta} & \text{ri} & \text{ki} & \text{ta} & \text{tom} \\
\text{ta} & \text{lān} & \text{-} & \text{gu} & \text{ta} & \text{ka} & \text{di} & \text{na} & \text{din} & \text{-}
\end{array}
\]

DN: About that 'ta lān - gu'...

TKM: You play 'ta lān - tom', but if you say it, 'ta lān - tom' won't come. So you say ta lān - gu.

³Demonstrates fingerings on the chair

⁴Demonstrates literal strokes for 'ta ka ta ri ki ta ta ka'
DN: There's only one way to play that...

TKM: There's only one 'ta Īēn - gu'

DN: When your teacher was giving lessons, the tālam was always there; is that right?

TKM: Yes, there was always tālam.

DN: What was the first lesson you remember in mīśra cāpu tāla?

TKM:

\[
\begin{align*}
ta & \quad \text{din} & \quad \text{na} \\
ta \; ta & \quad \text{din} & \quad \text{na} \\
\text{din} & \quad \text{din} & \quad \text{na} \\
t \; k \; t \; k & \quad \text{din} & \quad \text{na}
\end{align*}
\]

DN: Then?
TKM:

lta - ldn - na -
l- - ta ri lta ka di na
ldn - ldn - na -
lk t t k din - ldn - na -
ldn - ldn - na -
l t län g t k d n l t k t r k t t k
ldn - ldn - na -
l t län g t k d n l t k t r k t t k
lt län g l t k t r k t t k
lt län g t k d n l t k t r k t t k
lt län g l t k t r k t t k
lt län g t k d n l t k t r k t t k
lt län g l t k d n t k t r lk t t k din -
l t län g t k d n l t k t r lk t t k din -
l t län g t k d n l t k t r k t t k [din]

Understand this reduction; first two cycles, then one cycle, then half-cycle, then mörä.

DN: So first comes teka, then sol (phrase), then reduction, then mörä.

TKM: Every lesson will come just like this.

DN: What was the last lesson in this tâlam?

TKM: Big mörä, and 'ta din gi na tom'. He made big möräś for all thirty-five tâlas. I wrote them all down and kept them. I remember many körvais from then.
DN: So within each tālām, the structure of the lessons followed the structure of
the tani āvartanam—that first lesson; it’s possible to begin a tani āvartanam
like that.

TKM: Yes, like that he taught it step by step. Then he gave tiśram (gati)
(recites), and he taught me how to develop it. He made me do it to develop
my skills. He composed (lit. ‘said’) a tani āvartanam for śanākīṛṇa jāti dhruva
tālām. For that there is a ‘ta' din gi ṇa tom’; I’ll recite it...

ltā - di - ltā - k t t k l t r k t tom - l -
   di - ltā - k t t k l t r k t tom - l -
   ta - lk t t k t r k t l tom - - -
   lk t t k t r k t l tom - - -
   l t r k t tom -

tiśra (slow)
   ltā - ta lkā din ta l tā -
   ltā ka ta l - ta ka ldin ta ta l -
   ta lkā di kū ltā - ta lkā din ta
   ltā - l - ka - l - - di - - - l kū - - - l -
   ta - l - din l - - l gi - - l - āta - l - tom l - - -

   ltā - - lkā - - l di - - l kū -
   ltā - ldin - - l gi - - l tā - - l tom -

   ltā - ka l - di - l kū - ta l - din - l gi - āta l - tom -

   ltā ka di l kū ta din l gi āta tom
   ltā ka di l kū ta din l gi āta tom
   ltā ka di l kū ta din l gi āta tom

529 beat cycle; the longest of the thirty-five
Like this for every tālam he made kōrvais.

DN: Would you play this kōrvai in ādi tālam?

TKM: Not this one; I would play one designed for ādi tālam.\(^6\)

DN: ...one that had thirty-two beats?

---

\(^6\)This is because it's an ending kōrvai, designed to be played after the big mōrā.
TKM: Right, so many varieties. He also composed many big möräs:

lk ṭ t k t r k ṭ lom ta -
ta lk ṭ t k t r k ṭ lom ta -
ta ldi k ṭ t k t r lk ṭ tom
di - lt lān g din ta ldin ta din -

lk ṭ t k t r k ṭ lom ta -
ta lk ṭ t k t r k ṭ lom ta -
ta ldi k ṭ t k t r lk ṭ tom
di - lt lān g din ta ldin ta din -

lk ṭ t k t r k ṭ lom ta -
ta lk ṭ t k t r k ṭ lom ta -
ta ldi k ṭ t k t r lk ṭ tom
di - lt lān g din -

lta di k ṭ t k lt r k ṭ tom
di l- t lān g din l-

ta di k ṭ lt k t r k ṭ tom
lt k t r k ṭ t k ltan g ḍ
t k t r lk ṭ t k tan g ḍ
tl k t r k ṭ t k [tam]

DN: The day of a concert, while you're eating, or bathing, you may think, 'I have a concert today'—do you think about the tani āvartanam at those times?

TKM: I think about songs. Before the concert I don't know what he is going to sing, or whether he will sing a pallavi, or in what tāḷam; I think about the solo while he's singing the song (in which it will probably happen). Then I'll think, 'I could play this today, or I could play that today.' It all depends on how the 'hand speaks' (kai peserade). Today one pattern might come (oru sol
peserade); tomorrow that pattern might not work. If I try it and it doesn’t work, I’ll play something else.

DN: There’s an interesting thing in the way you’re using the language there. You’re using words like ‘sol’, or syllable, and ‘peserade’, or ‘speaks’, and you’re using them to describe movements you’re making with the fingers. You say ‘a syllable speaks’, or ‘a syllable doesn’t speak’—you’re talking about fingers, but you’re using words that describe speech:

TKM: See, this is a sol (plays pattern on the chair); it’s a sarvalaghū, or ṭēka. I can say it like this (recites), but there are many ways to play it. However you play it, you can develop it from there. My teacher trained me like this.

DN: Let me see if I’ve got that. You can do certain things on different days, so his teacher taught him that if this comes, you can develop along this line, and if that comes, you can develop along that line. Either way, you’re okay—is that what he’s saying?

H: Yes, that’s what he is saying. (translates)

TKM: Yes, whatever the hand does nicely on that day, that’s what you develop.

DN: That’s what makes you a master. A less experienced, less quick-minded person will take a direction and not be able to develop it.

TKM: Here’s a simple calculation principle; my teacher gave it to me and to Palghat Mani Iyer. You have five jāṭis, but there are many tālas that don’t go with them. Eleven beats, for example; this doesn’t fit any jāṭi—for this, a small calculation principle. Divide eleven in half; each half will be five-and-a-half—take away two, leaving three-and-a-half. Call each three-and-a-half fourteen, so two sevens:

7Demonstrates miśra jāṭi tripuṭa.

8That is, multiply everything by four.
&ta ka j&nu &ta ki ta ta lka jo &nu ta lki ta
di - &ltan k t t k t r lk t t k
ta ka ljo &nu ta ki &ta ta ka jo &nu ta ki ta
lt l&an g din ta l&din ta din -

&ta ka j&nu &ta ki ta ta lka jo &nu ta lki ta
di - &ltan k t t k t r lk t t k
ta ka ljo &nu ta ki &ta ta ka jo &nu ta ki ta
lt l&an g din ta l&din ta din -

&ta ka j&nu &ta ki ta ta lka jo &nu ta lki ta
di - &ltan k t t k t r lk t t k
ta ka ljo &nu ta ki &ta ta ka jo &nu ta ki ta
lt l&an g din -

&ta ka j&nu &ta ki ta ta lka jo &nu ta lki ta
lt l&an g din -

&ta ka j&nu &ta ki ta ta lka jo &nu ta lki ta
lt l&an g din ta l&din -
t l&an g l&din ta din -
lt l&an g din ta [din]

Like this eleven, thirteenth, seventeen—any tālam

DN: So for thirteenth,
TKM: Divide it in half; six-and-a-half, six-and-a-half. Take away two, four-and-a-half, so eighteen akṣaras; three sixes, or two plus sixteen,

\[
\begin{align*}
tan \ g \ dt \ k \ tr \ k\ t \ t \ k \\
tan \ g \ dt \ k \ tr \ k\ t \ t \ k \\
tan \ g \ dt \ k \ tr \ k\ t \ t \ k \\
di - \ tan \ k\ t \ t \ k \ tr \ k\ t \ t \ k \\
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
tan \ g \ dt \ k \ tr \ k\ t \ t \ k \\
tan \ g \ dt \ k \ tr \ k\ t \ t \ k \\
tan \ g \ dt \ k \ tr \ k\ t \ t \ k \\
t \ \l an \ g \ din \ ta \ din \ ta \ din -
\end{align*}
\]

or

\[
\begin{align*}
ta - \ k\ t \ t \ k \ tr \ k\ t \ t \ k \ tr \ k\ t \ t \ k \\
k\ t \ t \ k \ tr \ k\ t \ t \ k \ tr \ k\ t \ t \ k \\
di - \ tan \ k\ t \ t \ k \ tr \ k\ t \ t \ k \\
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
ta - \ k\ t \ t \ k \ tr \ k\ t \ t \ k \ tr \ k\ t \ t \ k \\
k\ t \ t \ k \ tr \ k\ t \ t \ k \ tr \ k\ t \ t \ k \\
t \ \l an \ g \ din \ ta \ t \ \l an \ g \ din -
\end{align*}
\]

It's a small idea. Using this idea, Palghat Mani was able to play for any pallavi (and come up with a solo) in any tālam. Here's an idea for composing 'ta din gi na toms'. Five tens are fifty; six tens are sixty, seven tens are seventy, etc. For now, take fifty, and we want to play for ādi tālam. It will start after fourteen:
ltá di tan gəlt ktrkțtk
ltan gətktrlkțtk
kțtkltrektom
kțlktrokțtom
lkțtkltrektom
kțlktrokțtom
tiśra
lktatkarilktatomb-
ktatkarikilktomb-
ktatkarilktom-

Seven will come for an eleven beat cycle; eleven times four, forty-four, times two cycles, eighty-eight; ten sevens start after eighteen akṣaras:
ltan gḍ t k t r lk ṭ t k
tan gḍ lt k t r k ṭ t k
ltan gḍ t k t r lk ṭ t k

ta - ldi - ta k ṭ lton
ta - di l- ta k ṭ tom
ltá - di - lta k ṭ tom

and there's your 'ta din gi ṯa tom'.

DN: It's a beautiful idea. When you think about the mṛdaṅgam, what do you listen to inside; the mṛdaṅgam? or the syllables? Do you understand my question?

TKM: The syllables (points at mouth)

DN: That's what I thought.

H: Even when he is sleeping he will be telling (solkaṭṭu)

TKM: When I'm lying down, very beautiful things come. When that happens, I go to my teacher's photograph and do namaskāram—"You gave me this; you have put this in my head, and it's very nice: for that, namaskāram".

DN: When you're listening inside like that, how will the tāḷam come? Is there some sound?
TKM: The heart puts the tālam (demonstrates)

DN: Really?

TKM: (puts head back, relaxes, begins reciting) Like this; (DN takes his wrist, feels pulse; TKM recites sarvalaghu in time with his heartbeat) This is where I get my timing (sense of rhythm); the heart—puk-puk-puk—

DN: Your own personal kālapramanam; but when you play a concert, how will you adjust?

TKM: Then I have to adjust to their kālapramanam. I can't do anything else.

DN: When you're playing a tāni, how do you know when it's time to end it?

TKM: I decide that for myself. Some days I'll play for twenty minutes or half an hour; maybe tomorrow five minutes will be enough. If I'm happy on that day, if the kālapramanam is good, and he (the singer) is keeping tālam nicely, and the drum is good, and the audience, then I feel like playing more. If the audience is not enjoying, then I also won't be interested in playing (for a long time).

DN: Here's an question; would you play a mīśra kōrvai in ādi tālam?

TKM: I calculate it.

DN: How? Like this? If it's fourteen beats, then three times makes forty-two, so it has to start on the seventh beat; right?

TKM: Right. Some kōrvais will be three āvartas, or five āvartas, like that, so I have to think how to put this into that.

DN: Some people will say that, in ādi tālam, a kōrvai has to begin and end on the iḍam.

TKM: I will also do that; from sama to sama. I will do it this way and that way. Here's one of my teacher's kōrvais that everybody plays:
ltə - di - ltə ka jo ɳu
   ldi - ta ka ljo ɳu
ta ka ljo ɳu
ta din l- gi ɳa tom l- gu
ta din l- gi ɳa tom l- gu
ta din l- gi ɳa tom lta -
   ta l- di - ki lta tom
ta - ldi - ki ɳa ltom
ta - di l- ki ɳa ltom

DN: Yes, everybody knows that one.

TKM: It's my teacher's. He knew how to play gaṭam, kanjira—each instrument has its own fingering. Nagarajan's kanjira fingering is beautiful. Nowadays, though, they don't do it like that. They play everything as if it were the mṛdaṅgam. If you play with the correct fingerings, you won't get much callouses (on your hands). Feel my hands...

DN: Like my teacher's. When I was beginning, for the first three or four years I got lots of callouses—another subject—do you compose your own kōrvais?

TKM: Many of them.

DN: When you play solos, do you play your own kōrvais?

TKM: Yes, also my teacher's, and Palani Subramania Pillai's.

DN: Which of his (Palani Subramania Pillai's) do you use?

TKM: 'ta di - ta jem - ta - ta - jem -'
   I also play Ramdas Rao's kōrvais. His specialty is the arai cāpu—kōrvais that end with the arai cāpu He plays arai cāpu extremely beautifully. I also like to play Dakshinamurthy Pillai's mōrās. I use things from everybody; but when it comes out, it comes out my own way.
DN: Sure; you'll change the fingerings and all to fit your style—when you listened to Palani Subramania Pillai, you would put your own solkaṭṭu to that.

TKM: Yes, I would attribute that style to my own. I want to tell you a true story. I was playing near Golden Rock, in Trichy—Palani Subramania Pillai was in the audience, and he was very fond of me and my playing, so I wanted to play one of his kōrvaīs. While I was playing, I noticed him looking thoughtful; he was hearing something in his style, but there was a change. Afterward he asked me to play it; I played it once, and he said, "Play it again." Second time, "Play it again." The third time, I asked him if he was checking to see whether I had played it correctly. He said, "No, it's very beautiful; I'm not saying you're doing anything wrong, but you've changed something, and I want to hear how you've changed it."

He didn't let me eat after that concert; we went off by ourselves and discussed all these things. I told him one fingering change I had made, and he said, "No, that's wrong." We argued about that. But I told him, "Your first three lines go ten, nine, nine; if you do ten, then nine, the next line has to be eight." When he listened to it that way, he was very happy, and said "It's very fine."

I've heard some very old players: Kumbakonam Araliganambia Pillai, Dakshinamurthy Pillai; actually, I sometimes use his fingering for 'ki tā ta ka ta ri ki tā tom' (demonstrates). In fact, I taught it to him; (indicates videographer J. Vaidyanathan) And this is Palani Subramania Pillai's (demonstrates fingering); it begins from the 'nam'. Like that I have gathered from everybody.

DN: I feel that your playing has something in common with Ranga's; that you both play like the music, and that the sound will be very beautiful.

TKM: When it comes to the song, I play in the style of our school, but Palani Subramania Pillai's school is very beautiful for accompaniment. It makes me
very happy that both styles exist. Nowadays, you won’t find the old style at all now. As far as the really old style goes, it’s only me and (Palghat) Raghu. I love to listen to Ranganathan; that toppi sound is really fine. I always used to watch how he played that ‘tom’; I’d go behind him and look at his left hand...I’d love to play the left hand like the way he does. Nowadays lots of people are playing very nicely, but I don’t like it much.

DN: No, it’s different now.

TKM: If you wish, you may ask more questions.

DN: No, we’ll have another interview after the concert. It’s enough for now.
KARAIKUDI R. MANI

FIRST INTERVIEW: FEBRUARY 23, 1988

DN: I have the privilege today of interviewing for videotape Karaikudi R. Mani, who is one of the most senior artists on the mṛdaṅgam these days. We’re going to be talking generally about his background, about learning the mṛdaṅgam, about teaching, and mostly about the structure of the tani āvartanam in general. I believe he has a couple of things he’d like to say before we go any farther, so please...

RM: Namaste. I am very pleased to talk with you, because of two things. You are a foreigner who likes Indian music, especially South Indian music, and most especially the rhythmic side, drum, mṛdaṅgam, like that, and you are a student of T. Ranganathan of Wesleyan University, a close friend of mine. Whenever I think of USA, first will come in my mind Ranga and Viswa. So just I am thinking of them, and then I am starting this. (Reading) I hail from the town Karaikudi, in South India. I was born and brought up from Karaikudi, in interior South India. I was born on 11 September, 1945. I am now 43. When I was five years old, I started playing mṛdaṅgam.

DN: Who was your teacher at that time?

RM: Initially I was tutored in vocal music only—from my father. Because my father was a schoolteacher as well as a music teacher. Both mathematics and music. So he trained me for most of the songs, like tevāram, tiruppugāli, divyaprabandam—the devotional side. So in my early age, that is, three years old, I joined some competitions, and won first prize...

DN: At the age of three?

RM: Three. Sometimes I would fall asleep, and my father would give me some chocolate, wake me up, and ask me to sing. So from my early stage I was doing only vocal music. Next, my father used to go to temples often, also on
festival days, and he made it a point to take me with him. As I was a small boy then, I could not have a glimpse of the deity being taken around the temple in the chariot car.

DN: You were not allowed to? or you were too small?

RM: I was so small I couldn’t see that. So my father used to make me sit on his shoulders to enable me to have a good view of the deity, and also to listen to the nādasvaram party playing and going on before the temple car. So at that time, I used to listen to the nādasvaram. When the nādasvaram was playing, I would listen because I knew music. When the tavil was playing, because it is a rhythmic instrument, I used to play the beats on his head, enjoying the music and the jolly ride on his shoulders.

So it was here that my father spotted my spontaneous attraction towards laya, and its presence in me. He then decided to teach me mṛdaṅgam. I learned mṛdaṅgam initially under one Mr. Rangu Iyengar of Karaikudi. He lives even today at Karaikudi. This was how I started very early realizing my ambition to become a mṛdaṅgam artist. Next what do you want to ask?

DN: So you were four or five years old when you started?

RM: Five years old.

DN: And you studied with that man for how many years?

RM: I studied with him five to six or seven years. Actually, he taught me so much.

DN: You were six years old? What were the lessons like? Did he teach you ta di to m nam?

RM: Yes, from the beginning...then

    ta ta ki ta
but Rangu Iyengar belonged to the Karaikudi Muthu Iyer school, so I played all that school—I trained like that. Karaikudi Muthu Iyer plan is different.

DN: How would you describe it?

RM: That is, you take one word...

\[ \text{ta ka ta ri ki ta ta ka} \]

that ‘ta ka ta ri ki ta ta ka’, now is

\[ \text{ta ta cha ta ki ta ta ka} \]

Previously I was taught by

\[ \text{nam ta ki ta ki ta ta ka} \]

DN: And they called that

\[ \text{ta ka ta ri ki ta ta ka?} \]

RM: Yeah. I was trained like that. Most of the time I was playing only—my teacher was staying upstairs—most of the time I am going to my teacher’s house, and stayed downstairs playing with my friends, and then back to my house. My father would ask me “Are you learning?” (Did you have a lesson?) “Yes” Most of the time I was bluffing. Because my father is a teacher, he trained me, morning I should wake up five o’clock—immediately I should sing for one hour. After that, one hour playing mṛdaṅgam. After that one hour I would study my academic course. Then only he gave me a cup of coffee.

DN: Not even coffee? (before that)
RM: Yeah. After that I would finish my bath and go to the school. Evening I come back—one hour playing—I played cricket, like that. Again one hour singing, playing mṛdaṅgam, and usual school studies—sleep, nine o'clock. In those early days I was crazed to see cinema pictures, so he took advantage. When I did this work regularly for one week, he would give twenty naia paise to see the cinema. So I was doing all these things for seeing the cinema only. So I was not very serious in the early years. I didn't think I was going to be a mṛdaṅgam player. It's an accident—I will tell you later. My coming as mṛdaṅgam artist, it's very accidental.

My father was friendly with all the musicians, because my house was in front of Aryakudi Ramanuja Iyengar's. So my father used to bring musicians to my home, they would stay in my home, and sometimes nearby Karaikudi they would have concerts—usually they would come to my house, and naturally, my father asked me to play for the musicians. Then, P. Muruga Das—first I played for him, for a devotional concert—at that time I was seven or eight years. I had gone to that stage. In the early days concerts will start only after nine o'clock, so I was often sleepy. My father would ply me with chocolate.

DN: To get you to go to the concert, or to get you to play?

RM: When I sat in the stage I was...(imitates nodding) so immediately my father would give me chocolate, "Come on, get up." After that I studied my school final—a lot of concerts I played. Because of my father I was singing and practicing this music, and he would advise me to listen to all the mṛdaṅgists—their playing. So he would tune in the radio; morning hours we have so many concerts on the radio—so many mṛdaṅgams he bought for me, and asked me to play along with the radio concerts.

In my twelfth year, I think, in the All-India Radio in Trichy, for small boys...it was called mani mela. They were conducting some programs for the small boys, so I used to give performances. I gave so many performances—not for concerts. I was trained only for devotional music, that divyanama kīrtanas. After that, bhajan—do you know bhajan? In eka desi, every month one
particular day it will come—tomorrow is also eka desi. On eka desi days, in
Vaishnava temples, that is Rama and Krishna temples, they are giving
bhajans—traditional bhajans. My father knew the bhajans also, so he took me
there and asked me to play. Most of the temple festivals and auspicious
days, even now the bhajana is conducted by so many people. It’s a very
great experience.

Every artist, especially mṛdaṅgīst, should know how to play for bhajana and
harikatha—it’s most important. Accidentally it came to me. It used to begin
eight or nine o’clock. Middle of the night three o’clock only it will end. All the
time I will play. What is special in harikatha and bhajana, the tālam is going
on—once you decide (figure out) what is the tālam, the song will (have)
end(ed). So immediately you have to (be) so alert. Experienced hands only
they can play. So it’s a very (important) experience to me—that time. It helps
me now so much.

DN: Did you get to accompany these people because they were in your town
and they needed somebody to play? How did it come about?

RM: My father knew them. Usually my father would invite all the musicians to my
house, give them food and all these things. Because I was a small boy, the
artists and the audience wanted me to play; in those days my name was
Master Mani, not Karaikudi Mani, and people would enjoy; “Oh, see, a small
boy is playing.”

In Margeri Masom, the Tamil month, every morning four o’clock they will
have bhajans from the temple through the four streets. At that time they will
tie the mṛdaṅgam and go walking. I could not tie it, because I was too small.
So after coming to the temple, at every place where there is a deity, they will
sit for fifteen minutes here, fifteen minutes there. So I used to play. So lot of
people were watching me, because I was very small, and I am playing some
good…what you call?

DN: You had a good sound.
RM: Sound, and all these things. So, I was trained like that. After that, the artists also liked me, because—there are so many things—first, the people will come when they see a small boy. Secondly, on the point of money...

DN: They don't have to pay you very much.

RM: (laughs) That's the reason also, I think.

DN: Well, they may have been thinking about that, but you must have been playing very well, or they wouldn't have...

RM: I don't know.

DN: We don't have any tape recordings from those days.

RM: When I was playing in my house, this Ramanuja Iyengar used to hear my playing, so he called my father—my father's name is Ramanathan—he called him Ramu—"Ramu, who is playing in your house?" "My son is playing." "Oh, you didn't tell me. He is playing very nicely—ask him to come here." So I came to him, and I played in front of him, so he was very much impressed. "He should learn under a very giant artist." Two days later, in Devakottai, about 10 km. from my place, they are conducting a very famous Tyagaraja utsavam. Especially in Devakottai, Ramanuja Iyengar, Alathur, GNB, all the big shots, all the big musicians would sing. At that time Palghat Mani Iyer was going to play for the pancharatna.

DN: But you had heard him on the radio by this time.

RM: Yeah, radio and personally also. I used to go there and listen to most of the concerts, because in Chettinad—Karaikudi is in Chettinad—music has grown with the Chettiad people—all the Chettiar spend a lot of money on the music, and on the musicians also. So he (Ramanuja Iyengar) asked me to come for this pancharatna. I know all these pancharatna, also—I could sing them in my sixth year, because my father taught me all five songs. He asked me to come to that place, and I asked, "Can I bring my mrdangam?" "No, no. I will make arrangements—you just come with your father." There
was a fence there—only musicians are allowed inside, all the people sit outside. When I came there, Ramanuja iyengar asked me to come inside.

So I sat there—four songs are gone. At that time, Ramachandran and Palghat Mani Iyer both were playing. And also Palani Subramania Pillai—three people were playing. Before that I think Ramanuja iyengar told Palghat Mani Iyer, “A boy is coming to that place; ask him to play for one song. Whenever you want to, you can allow him to play.” So last song, Endaro mahanu bhavulu, Palghat Mani Iyer said to me, “Ambi, ni wasi” (‘come on, sport, play’) I was thrilled. I was sitting very near to him for the first time. Thrilled, and nervous also. So, simply just I was hesitating—I don’t have any mrdangam...

DN: Because he asked you not to bring it.

RM: I look around—who is going to give me a mrdangam? Suddenly he (Palghat Mani Iyer) gave his mrdangam—his own drum. “You play.” So just I played what was going on. He was very impressed, so he was enjoying. But Ramanuja iyengar was seeing Palghat Mani Iyer only; he wasn’t hearing my playing. He was seeing whether Palghat Mani Iyer is impressed or not. I am watching only Ramanuja iyengar—I didn’t want to see Palghat Mani Iyer.

After finishing all these things, Ramanuja iyengar took me to Palghat Mani Iyer’s room. “Here is this boy. Already you have heard his playing—you should take him.” Ramanuja iyengar recommended me. He asked me, “What are you doing?” “I am studying 10th standard.” “Oh, I see. You’d better finish your school studies and then come to me. I will teach you.” He said like that.

DN: Because you only had two more years to go...

RM: Yeah. He advised Ramanuja iyengar, “The study is most important nowadays. Ask him to finish at least his (basic) school study. If a letter comes from an organization in English, at least he should (know how to) read and
reply to that.” Because he felt he didn’t know how to do that—if a letter comes for him, he has to find somebody (to read it to him). His school study was only minimum. Ramanuja Iyengar also himself saw it was a good point. “You better study and then I will take you.”

Two years after that I went to Ramanuja Iyengar to take me to Palghat Mani Iyer. And he took me to Palghat Mani Iyer. But unfortunately he said, “Oh, you are studying. I am touring most of the time; you won’t be able to travel with me. You have to go to second class, third class.” In those days school study was a very big thing. Anyhow, he didn’t want (to teach me). I don’t know—it was unfortunate for me.

DN: It was a disappointment to you, I’ll bet.

RM: At that time I was so disappointed. Even though he said, “My blessings always to you.” So, it’s unfortunate for me. I thought like that. So, I was just finishing my studies. I entered college—I got the seat also; at that time, pre-university course, that is first year. At that time Ramanuja Iyengar came for a concert in Karaikudi; Vinayakaram to accompany on gātam. He heard my playing—at that time I was very popular on that side—he wanted to see me and listen to my playing, so he came to my house. He came to Ramanuja Iyengar’s house, just opposite, and immediately he came to my house, asked me to play—asked my father.

So I played for some time. He told me his father, T. Harihara Sharma had just started a school in Madras named Sri Jaya Ganesh Tālavādya Vidyālayam. Naturally, when you start a school, the principal and all want some good players, so he said to my father, “He is finishing his studies—ask him to come to Madras. My father will teach him for further studies.” My father also thought like that, because at that I had time two, three months leave—vacation (from school). Immediately he sent me to Madras. One sister was settled in Madras, and my mother’s sister also in Madras. So I came to my sister’s house.

DN: You must have been about seventeen years old at that time.
RM: No, before that—I think fifteen, sixteen. I think 1960, I am forty-five, so fifteen. So two to three months, daily I came from my sister's house, and THS said, "You are playing so much. You know the strokes, all these things. You are playing for concerts, everything. But I want to train you in the Tanjore bani." Because THS was a disciple of Tanjore Vaidyanatha Iyer. He was senior to Palghat Mani Iyer. Originally he was a mṛdāṅgīst, but he had an accident in his finger. In order to maintain his family he was forced to take up morning (jaw harp). He wanted to spread the Tanjore bani. He was thinking what is the easiest way to teach the boys the basics of Tanjore bani. So he told me "You just forget all these things; I am going to begin fresh from 'ta, di, tom, nam.'"

DN: How did you feel about that?

RM: At that time I was so upset. He realized it. "You don't need to (be) upset (about) anything. Within two months you can play in this style." He assured me. Always he used to encourage me also. So immediately I accepted it. Then I started from the beginning. Within one month I finished all the lessons; all the lessons, and I switched over into this plan. I just forgot that Muthu Iyer bani. And then usually I would practice with Vinayakaram; he was also at that time a student, and he was also teaching gaṭām. Both of us were playing.

At that time the mṛdāṅgī artist would not come up immediately—the side accompaniments came earlier to the bigger concerts. So when he was going for concerts he used to take me with him. So I used to listen to Palghat Mani Iyer's concerts—more concerts in Madras, because Madras is the center of this music. Unfortunate, I didn't hear a single concert of Palani Subramania Pillai.

DN: You never heard him? That's amazing!

RM: I (would have) loved to hear, but there was no chance to hear. I used to hear Mani Iyer, and Murugabhoopati's playing in my early days—mostly the
two of them. Initially I was so much interested in Palghat Mani Iyer's (playing), and mannerisms also. See, he didn't take the crop; small hair is there (he didn't cut his hair short all over—he let a little grow on top) and when he is playing, sometimes he will just look up, and when he was playing the concert suddenly he would stop—two, three āvartas without mṛdaṅgam, without any reason! I was doing all these things, all his mannerisms.

DN: You kept your hair like that?

RM: Yeah, like that. Just one or two years like that. Harihar Sharma took me to all the big organizations. He was conducting demonstrations with the school's students. Whenever he had a demonstration he insisted I play. In Madras I was popular like this; he took me to some big organizations and musicians, and asked me to play in front of them. The secretaries, the people, the musicians (were) impressed with me, and they began to ask me to play their concerts.

DN: During your Mani Iyer phase, when you went to his concerts, were you able to get his kōrvais and mōrās and those things? Were you able to understand what he was doing?

RM: Yeah—but, my observation about Mani Iyer's playing, kōrvais or anything, it's very simple.

DN: You felt that even at that time?

RM: Yes. But the way of playing, it's astonish(ing). When he played the strokes (recites) the strokes, the sound—you can't imagine. The strokes just going...Ah! The mind and body is full! Simple kōrvais he can play, but the way of playing, giving effect...it's more. After that, I used to hear tapes of Mr. Palani Subramania Pillai—two or three only I heard. One (with) GNB, and (with) Alathur. The two tapes only I hear his playing. Mani Iyer's playing...when he'd go from caturaśram into tiśram or from caturaśram into khaṇḍam, he will go straight.
Subramania Pillai will play the same khaṇḍam

he will (be) hiding something a little bit. He is taking two akṣaras, and 10 mātrās, and the permutation/combination he played like this. First of all you cannot understand what he is playing the first time. At this time I started to think.

DN: That was the beginning of it. You must have been about eighteen?

RM: I think twenty. I started thinking, these are the two ways (Palghat Mani Iyer & Palani Subramania Pillai) I wanted to change my way of playing, but whether to go to straight or to hiding? I wanted to elevate the way of playing.
DN: Are you saying that you heard both of those and that you were aware of some other way?

RM: Yeah. Another way I wanted to make, but at that time I could not do that, because at that time I didn't have maturity in music. So just I would think—for example, Palani Subramania Pillai played:

\[
\text{ita} \quad \text{ita ka din} \quad \text{ltam} \quad \text{k t t k}
\]
\[
\text{kdin ta ki ta ka din} \quad \text{kdin} \quad \text{din} \quad \text{ita}
\]
\[
\text{ltam} \quad \text{kdin ta ki ta ka din} \quad \text{kdin} \quad \text{din} \quad \text{ita}
\]
\[
\text{ita} \quad \text{ita ka di na}
\]
\[
\text{kdin ta ki ta ka di na kdin} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{tom}
\]
\[
\text{ta} \quad \text{ta ka di na}
\]
\[
\text{din ta lki ta ka di na din} \quad \text{ita} \quad \text{tom}
\]
\[
\text{ita} \quad \text{ita ka di na}
\]
\[
\text{kdin ta ki ta ka di na kdin} \quad \text{ta}
\]

Only Palani Subramania Pillai will play this; he used to play the same thing for caturaśram, khaṇḍam, tiśram, and caturaśra melkāla—higher tempo. Whenever he played it, he played like this. But the basic (idea) is caturaśram—eight akṣaras. That same eight akṣaras he will play for khaṇḍam and tiśram. I thought, when you play khaṇḍam, why don't you take 10 akṣaras? You compose as ten akṣaras; when you play in khaṇḍa it will come as eight akṣaras.

DN: You're reversing the idea in a way.

RM: Yeah. I took this idea from him, but I composed the other things.
So ten akṣaras and ten akṣaras for one cycle. So for half a cycle you have to reduce; it should come five only.

First we are giving four kārvais; for half a cycle we should give two kārvais only. And then quarter cycle,

two and half. The arudī should come in caturaśram in ten akṣaras.
ltā - - - ltā ka di na
kōdi ta ki ṭa ltā ka di na
kōdi - ta - ḫom -
ta din l- gi ṅa ḫom
ltā din - gi ṭa ḫom
ta din l- gi ṅa ḫom

So when you go to khaṇḍam, easily it will approach.
та - - - та ԓа дин - - - ԓдин - там - к т к
дин та ԓа та ԓа дин -

та ԓдин - та дин - та дин - та дин - та - -

та - - - та ԓа дин - - - ԓдин - там - к т к
дин та ԓа та ԓа дин -

та ԓдин - та дин - та дин - та дин - та - -

та - ки та та ԓа дин - дин - ԓдин -
та дин - та дин - та -

та та ки та та ԓа дин - дин - ԓдин -
та дин - та дин - та -

та - ки та та ԓа
tа дин - гу

та та ки та та ԓа
tа дин - гу

та - ки та та ԓа
tа дин - гу

та та ки та та ԓа
tа дин - гу

та - - - та ԓа дин -
dин та ԓа та ԓа дин - та - том -

tа дин - ли ԓа том
tа дин - ги ԓа том
tа ԓдин - ги ԓа том
DN: That has some practical advantages that I can think of right here. If you’re in a concert and you try to play Palani Subramania Pillai’s idea, if your khanḍam is a little different from the singer’s khanḍam there may be some problem with the tāḷam.

RM: Yeah. Difficult because, keeping tāḷa.

DN: And this one will be very clear.

RM: Idea only I have taken from him. Like this I have composed also for tiṣṭram, and for mīṣṭram also. Khanḍam and tiṣṭram everybody is doing. I wanted to make for mīṣṭram also. This mīṣṭram, nobody is composing like this.
DN: You composed all that when you were in your twenties?
RM: I composed. But I could not (then) play in the concerts. I would not throw in the concert; I was not confident. Like this, in tiṣram (see below)—twelve akṣaras.

DN: You played that yesterday...

RM: Yeah.

```
ldin - nan k t t k ta ldi na din -
di na ldin - nan k t t k ta ldi na din -
di na ldi na din - nan k t t t k ta ki ta
fa ka ldi na ta ki ta di lna - tom - -

ldin - nan k t t k ta ldi na din -
di na ldin - nan k t t k ta ldi na din -
di na ldi na din - nan k t t t k ta ki ta
fa ka ldi na ta ki ta di lna - tom - -
fa ta ka di na ta ki lfa di na - tom - l -
fa ta ka di lna ta ki ta di na ldi na - tom - -
fa di - ta ka ldi na ta ki ta di lna di na di na - tom - -
fa di -
fa di ki ta ka tom l -
fa di -
fa di ki ta ka ta di ki ta ka tom - -
fa di -
fa di ki lfa ka ta di ki ta lka ta di ki ta ka [tom]
```
You should not show it is going on in tiṣram. A normal student will be able to find out; a common man cannot find out. (recites) like this—I composed like a chain one by one, one by one, one by one. I set this.

DN: I'm trying to get a picture of what you were doing. You'd be working on this stuff at home, but what did you play in the concerts?

RM: I tried, a little. Little by little.

DN: And the rest of the things you were playing—were they kōrvāis you got from your teachers, or from the radio...

RM: Yeah, I should tell you. Before this, how I came to take (up a career) as a mṛdaṅgam player—when I was practicing in THS' school, he asked me to go to a competition in All-India Radio, in 1962. It was a very prestigious competition in those days. In those days all the top-ranking artists only were the judges—Palghat Mani Iyer, Palani Subramania Pillai, Murugabhoopaty, and Mr. T.N. Venkatramiyer—he is an authority on Diksitar kṛtis. Only top people were judges.

It was a very prestigious award; the President himself would give that. All over India every year they selected the young talented. So he (THS) asked me to go there...by God's grace I was first. Because we were very young, the government usually gave for the father and mother additional (train) tickets to go over to Delhi, and two, three days before they would look after us, and one rehearsal...for meeting the President, and other rehearsals. It's very systematic. At that time all the people and the press were praising us; so I was a little (dizzy). I had a little hangover at this early stage. So I was (intending that) I was not going to study afterwards.

I was playing continuously, feeling the people('s reaction)—the people were praising me—like that. So I discontinued my study. I had gone to the college for a few months, then I discontinued, and stayed in my sister's house permanently. Because of me, the school (JGTV) improved (grew) so much.
Because the product of that school won the President’s Award, a lot of mothers and fathers sent their children to that school. Then he got me a Central Government scholarship; for two years they give some money to the student.

That kind of scholarship also was very tough (to get) at that time. The same juries were sitting; they are asking so many questions, so many difficult questions. How you are playing—the way of playing, they are asking the calculations, how you play kōrvais in ādi tāḷam, then suddenly they are giving some other tāḷas—changing the same kōrvai to that place—that kind of audition will be there.

The preliminary audition was first. They selected two from every state. Out of all the selected candidates, again they will select only two. Like that for violin, mṛdaṅgam (etc.). It’s a very tough game. I was first, so I was forced to stay in Madras; during that scholarship time (period) I should not go anywhere. I should study with my teacher, I should stay in Madras only.

By that time my father had retired from that school; my father and mother were alone in my native place. So this (scholarship provided) a way to take them to Madras, to settle in Madras. So I settled in Madras at that time, and they came also—in ’64, I think. During those two years...THS knew so many things, but for advanced studies there was one of his students, one K.M. Vaidyanathan. Now he is a gāṭam player, who played mṛdaṅgam also. He is a very intelligent person; all the musicians accept that he is very intelligent, even now. So two years he trained me. With his suggestions and his way of teaching, I am able to compose so many things.

DN: So he had the key...

RM: Of course. He gave some small ideas like these I just told (recited). He gave me two, three ideas like those, so I was able to compose. Most of the kōrvais he taught me begin with ‘tom’ and end with the ‘tom’ also.
Igu gu na na lki ɗa din - l - lta - lta - din - l - lta - l -

gu gu ha na ki ɗa ɗin - lta - ta - ɗin - l - lta - ldi - ldi - lta - lta - din - l - lta - l -

ta - di - lki ɗa ɗom

ta - di - ki lta ɗom
ta - ldi - ki ɗa ɗom - -

ta ɗhi ki ɗa ɗom

ta ɗdi ki ɗa ɗom

ta ɗdi ki lta ɗom - -

lki ɗa ɗom

ki lta ɗom

ki ɗa [ɗom]

All our körvai will come

ki ɗa ɗom

ki ɗa ɗom

ki ɗa ɗom ta

But this körvai will come on the ‘tom’. Then you have to play second (speed) (recites, starting ‘ta ka ta ri ki ɗa din - ’)
‘gu gu na na ki ɗa din’ I cannot say (so fast), so I have changed (recites whole körvai). So ‘tom’ will come.
DN: Is that to make it easier to play fast?

RM: No, (it's) just a change for a körvai (if) you start with the 'tom', and finish with the 'tom'.

DN: With the same one, though, not a doubled one.

RM: Yes. samam will start 'tom', samam will end the same 'tom'. So this type he made me to compose. Scholarship period he taught me so many things—that two years I cannot forget. After that little bit, little bit I played for concerts. Music Academy at that time, at that time, 5:30 concerts were very prestigious; first I played a 1:30 junior concert, and second year also, and I won the Henry Cowell Award. After that they will promote me at the sub-senior (level), 2:30 concerts. Two years I played 2:30 concerts.

At that time I was a little bit popular outside also, so the artists wanted me to accompany on night concerts. Night concerts I played for D.K.Jayaraman, two, three years. After that, one group singing I played for opening (of the Music Academy season) for 5:30 concert. At that time, when there was a junior concert, or sub-senior concert, all the top-ranking musicians would come to see who was along coming better—like that. The up-and-coming artists also were very sincere—they were afraid to play on the Music Academy stage, because everybody was there. In front of them everybody was nervous; they wanted to give their best.

D.K.Pattammal came to one concert (I played). Immediately she called THS on the phone, asking me to meet her. She asked me to play for her concert; immediately I accepted, and I used to play her concerts (regularly). At that time, '68 or '70, I am not so popular...usually she will sing for 5:30 concerts (in Academy), and the next year when her husband Easwar lyer contacted the Secretary, he said, "For Pattammal's concert at the Academy, please submit Karaikudi Mani" (as accompanist). The organizers didn't want to, because I was very young and I was not so popular. They argued with
Easwar Iyer, but he told them, "If Mani is playing, Pattammal will sing. If Mani is not going to be playing, Pattammal will not sing."

DN: Well, then they had to agree.

RM: I cannot forget this. They were forced to give me a 5:30 concert. People and organizations were so impressed (that they apologized) "We are very sorry. It's okay." The next year, for that concert, M.S. Subbulakshmi wanted me to play for her. After that, for five years I played for MS also. After that milestone little bit little bit I was growing. Only after that did I start practicing in my house (according to) the plan of my early days (new types of compositions). Practicing all the time. In my early days I didn't practice; after that only, two years I practiced so much.

DN: When you had your own ideas, you started to practice...

RM: Yeah. Sincerely I practiced. Because in Vinayakaram's school, a co-student and I would make a competition out of the full paran pattern—it will come two minutes—we would just be sitting together and I would say, "I can play it twenty-five times—can you?" Just for fun we were playing. So, I was not doing it sincerely. After that I felt my responsibility, so I was playing what I had been gathering before that. So, vigorously I played. Then just little bit, little bit I would throw it (the new things) in the concerts. All the musicians were watching—"Oh, every concert you are doing something new!"

DN: But for you it's not new—just that you hadn't been able to do it before.

RM. Yeah—it's not new. So people liked me; something is different from others.

DN: What is it that's different; can you say?

RM: You know the playing of mṛdaṅgam, you have heard so many mṛdaṅgam (players)... the approach to playing, going from caturaśram to khanḍam, caturaśram to tiśram—in tiśram, the permutation and combination—you can find (figure it) out.
DN: Yes, but there’s something else. I would say that your compositions are different from other people’s; they’re longer, and they have more parts. Do you understand what I’m getting at? The körvais I first learned all had two parts—what Ranga used to call the body, and the mőrā.

RM: You please tell (recite) an example.

DN: The oldest one ever;

\begin{verbatim}
Ita - tam - l -
ta ka tam - -
ta lki ta tam - l -
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
ta din gi lna tom
ta din lgi na tom
ta ldin gi na tom
\end{verbatim}

Now the first part isn’t a mőrā, and in terms of the arithmetic, it doesn’t make any sense—you just have to take it as given; but the mőrā does make (arithmetical) sense. The first part is what was handed down by the masters, so we accept it as valuable. Your things seem more complicated in terms of the structure, and each part of the structure is very orderly. Everything always makes (arithmetical) sense.

RM: Yeah. Of course. This körvai, in the very, very early days they are playing. In the first part you can see that...ta - tam - - - , six. Then ta ka tam - - , five. Next what will come?

DN: It would have to be four.

RM: But what comes? Six, five, again six—how it is possible?

DN: Damaru yati? (laughs)

RM: Personally, I won’t accept this.
DN: And that unwillingness to accept it led you into a completely new style of composing. What are the important features of your compositions? What do you think about when you're making something?

RM: From the beginning it should come as a calculation—order.

DN: So you start out with—numbers?

RM: For example,

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta} & \quad \text{tom} - \quad \text{ta} - \quad \text{tom} - \quad \text{ta} - \quad \text{tom} - \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{tom} - \quad \text{ta} - \quad \text{tom} - \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{di} \quad \text{ku} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{tom} - \quad \text{ta} - \quad \text{tom} - \\
\text{You won't find any mistakes; the first portion should come this right way.}
\end{align*}
\]

DN: But do you still think of a körvai as having two parts?

RM: Yeah, of course. But the first part also should come the right way.

DN: Do you think of those

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta} & \quad \text{- ki} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{din} - \quad \text{din} - \quad \text{din} - \quad \text{na} - \\
\text{compositions as körvais?}
\end{align*}
\]

RM: It's not a körvai, it's a phrase. Last one only is arūdi. It's a composition—a set of compositions.

DN: When Palani Subramania Pillai used to play that, it seemed less like a finished composition. The way you've taken it, you've made a much more formalized, long composition out of that idea.

RM: I have composed certain things like a chain; one by one, one by one. You take one miśram idea:
ltɑ - - dɪn - - dɪn l - nɑn - ɡu tɔm -
lta ta ku dɪn - - dɪn l - nɑn - ɡu tɔm -
lta - - dɪn - -
ta lki - ki tɑ tɔm ta -
lta di - ki tɑ tɔm ta -
ta di - ki tɑ tɔm

ltɑ - - dɪn - - dɪn l - nɑn - ɡu tɔm -
lta ta ku dɪn - - dɪn l - nɑn - ɡu tɔm -
lta - -
ta - di - lki tɑ tɔm ta -
ta - lki - ki tɑ tɔm ta -
lta - di - ki tɑ tɔm [tam]

then I will start another pattern

ldɪn - ta dɪn - dɪn - lta dɪn - dɪn - ta dɪn l-
ta dɪn - tɑm -
ta ldɪn - tɑm -
ta dɪn -

then,

ldɪn - ta dɪn - dɪn - lta dɪn -
ta ka di na lтан - ɡu
ta ka di na lтан - ɡu
ta ka di na
then after one

\[ \text{ldin - ta din -} \]
\[ \text{ta ta lka di na tan - - gu} \]
\[ \text{ita ta ka di na tan - l- gu} \]
\[ \text{ta ta ka di na} \]

then for six

\[ \text{ita di - ki ta tom tam l- tam -} \]
\[ \text{ta di - lki ta tom tam - l-} \]
\[ \text{ta di - ki ta tom} \]

see, the kārvais increase.

DN: That's elegant—it means it increases by five every time; you just take five off and the mōrā starts from there.

RM: Then a small arudi for this:

\[ \text{ita di - ki ta tom} \]
\[ \text{ta ldi - ki ta tom} \]
\[ \text{ta di l- ki ta tom -} \]
\[ \text{ta di l- ki ta tom} \]
\[ \text{ta di - lki ta tom} \]
\[ \text{ta di - ki lta tom -} \]
\[ \text{ta di - ki lta tom} \]
\[ \text{ta di - ki ta tom [ta]} \]
then six plus eight

\[
\text{ltt - di - ta - ta lka di mi ta ka jo \(\mathfrak{g}\)u}
\]

So I am doing all this permutation-combination. Sometimes when I play, I will do this portion only—a little. I will see the audience, and my energy, and the instrument, if it's all okay I will play all these things, one by one, one by one. Then only you will feel I have composed long items.

DN: Does it ever happen that you compose something on the stage?

RM: Of course. But I do little bit (seldom); I accept my weakness.

DN: I'm not calling it a weakness...

RM: It is a weakness; I appreciate some artists—on the spot they will do.

DN: And you can tell that they're doing it on the spot?
RM: Yes. I appreciate Mr. Raghu also (especially). He is a very intelligent artist. On the spot he can do.

DN: Yeah—that's what he says.

RM: As I already told you, they (judges) will give some (unusual) tālām. Immediately he will calculate, and he will play. But I need a little time. At least five to ten minutes I need.

DN: To make sure everything works...

RM: Yeah. If you give the ten minutes, by God's grace I will do wonders.

DN: Do you like to prepare? For example, you're going to play tomorrow; do you think about that solo the day before, or the night before?

RM: No. You don't know which tālām they are going to give the tani āvartanam.

DN: There's no way to predict it at all?

RM: Sometimes for the important concerts I will ask the people what songs they are going to sing, whether they are going to sing a pāllavi. If they are going to sing a pāllavi, I (am) used to ask(ing) them, "Please tell (demonstrate) that pāllavi." I will prepare. Just fifteen or twenty minutes; it's enough for me. On the spot I don't want to do it. Because with all my activities nowadays, mṛdaṅgāṃ playing is absolutely secondary now. I am completely changing my mind to the spiritual side. All the time my mind is only concentrating on that spiritual side. So I cannot concentrate much more (as much) on the dais; so I need some time. You can see, most of the time I sit on the stage I close my eyes—I don't watch what is going on. I concentrate some other things.

DN: What other things? You don't have to talk about this, but I'm interested.

RM: That is a completely different subject—what my guruji has taught me. I concentrate on these things, so I cannot concentrate on the dais (if somebody does) immediately something new. So I need some time. It's
different from others—I need five to ten minutes. “I am going to sing this pallavi, in that tālam.” I will calculate during that time.

DN: You mentioned that the whole fountain of composing that you have done came from listening to other artists, Palghat Mani Iyer, et al. Do you still listen to other drummers?

RM: Yes, still.

DN: Do you ever play their compositions?

RM: No. Strictly I tell you, even a stroke I don’t play (of anybody else’s). I want to stick to my way of playing; I respect all the artists, all the ways of playing, I love to learn also, but I don’t want to play because I have a way of playing.

DN: Are you finding that as you progress in the spiritual side, music becomes less important?

RM: I am spending more time on this than on music. I will tell this—I respect Mani Iyer so much. In India, so many pūjās are there—Krishna, Rama, Kali, Amba; I am doing the Rama pūjā. But first we should do Vigneswara pūjā—Ganapati pūjā; my personal view is, every mṛdaṅgist taking the instrument, first he should think of Mani Iyer—then he should play. Why? Because he is the only man to bring status to the mṛdaṅgam. Before that, mṛdaṅgam artist was there, only as accompanying artist. He (Palghat Mani Iyer) demanded more; he would demand more money than the vocal artist. All the main artists adjusted to his date: “Whichever date Mani Iyer is free, I will sing.” No other artist attained this level. Only he gave status to the mṛdaṅgam.

DN: We’ve been talking for a long time today, and I have more questions, which we’ll get to in the second interview.

RM: I also want to tell some more things on that day.

DN: This has been wonderful. Thank you

RM: Thank you so much.
PALGHAT R. RAGHU

INTERVIEW PART ONE: MAY 14, 1988

DN: The first kinds of questions I want to ask are about where you were born and when.

RR: I was born in Burma—Rangoon. You want the year of birth? You want me to tell my age? (laughs) I don’t mind—1928.

DN: 1928—so that makes this year your 60th year; and what day?

RR: January 9th.

DN: Were your parents musicians?

RR: My grandfather was a self-made musician. See, my parents were all employed in the Burma government service. Burma was under the British—both India and Burma.

DN: So they were brought from India to Burma to work in the government service?

RR: No, my grandfather first went to Burma in search of a job. He got a job, then my father, my uncle, all of them followed. So my parents were all in the Burma government service.

DN: But the family is from Palghat, in Kerala?

RR: Yes, my father’s side is from Trichur, mother’s side from Palghat—Chittoor. My grandfather, though in government service, was a very self-made man, you know? He studied music books, listened to concerts, then came to India for about one year—I don’t know exactly—and toured with all the musicians—listened to their concerts, and became a good musician. In Burma his name was so popular. And he started coaching students; he
didn’t take it as a profession, but he was a self-made musician. He studied
the grammar, and the practical side also. In Burma he was a very well-
known man, and very highly disciplined in every way. Because of this I was
able to get this discipline which he inculcated in his family. That has helped
us a lot.

DN: At what age did you leave Burma?

RR: Even when I was in Burma, when I was two years old I started crushing all
these biscuit tins; I used to play on them and then when I was four years old
they got me a small mṛdaṅgam, about 15 inches, and I started playing on it.
In those days we got all those gramophone records; whenever a new record
came out, the company would send it to my house. We were the first to buy
those records—they knew we would buy. So I have heard the name of
Palghat Mani Iyer—when I listened to it, something was working in my mind.

DN: He was already making records when you were a small boy in Burma?

RR: Oh yes, oh yes. Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavatar, Aryakudi Ramanuja
Iyengar, Chowdiah, violinist, Palghat Mani Iyer, mṛdaṅgam. So Palghat
Mani was in my imagination. I just wanted to see him, I just wanted to learn
under him—that ardor had started already.

DN: From your early childhood you already knew that?

RR: Oh yes! When I listened to him, his records, something was working in my
mind.

DN: How old were you when you met him?

RR: Every four years my father used to come to India. He used to accumulate all
the leave; every four years you used to get four or five months at a stretch.
We used to come to India, and during one such visit, in Trichur, about 10
miles from our village, we heard that there was going to be concert by CVB,
a leading singer, accompanied by Palghat Mani Iyer and Chowdiah.
So the concert was supposed to start at nine o'clock—we went there at six o'clock itself and just sat in the front waiting (laughs). Those were days transport was very difficult. At nine o'clock when they came, that was the first time I saw Palghat Mani Iyer. I didn't talk to him, I didn't meet, that's all—I just saw him in the concert. But after the concert, that sound—that mṛdaṅga sound—even after returning to Burma it was just in my ears for two, three years. That sound was always—you know, when I was sleeping, when I was keeping quiet, I used to get that sound, that toppi sound.

DN: Who was teaching you then, though, when you were a small boy?

RR: Yes, there was one Palanisami Pillai in Rangoon. He was working in Customs Office or something like that. He used to play mṛdaṅga there. My grandfather asked him to teach me; he taught me. Then Tinyam Venkatramiah, he came to Burma. So he taught me for twenty days—twenty-one days; three weeks he was there—he taught me. I was about seven years of age then, so after twenty-one days both of us played a concert there: concert means, for a seven-year-old boy it's okay—all simple—ādi tāḷa—somebody sang there, just for people to know, to encourage me, you know. He was a very good teacher, and he taught me, and then he told me, "When you come to India you come and learn under me." So in the evacuation during the war, '40 or '41, we came to India.

DN: So it was World War II that drove you to India.

RR: Yes, yes. The steamer on which I came was the last one. My father, my uncle came walking from Burma. We came with the last ship. They said there are not going to be any more ships going to India, those who want to can go—so we took the last ship.

DN: Did you come to Madras?

RR: Yes. Before that my grandfather had come here and made all the arrangements—fixing a house, you know—all those things he had done, and so we came to India, studied under TV for two years. Again this war fever started in Madras also. People slowly started evacuating Madras. By
that time many musicians used to come to my house and play, ask me to play—they used to encourage me—some of them said, “He has to be taken to Palghat Mani Iyer, he should teach him”, and all that.

So, during the war in Madras we went to Palghat—otherwise we didn’t have any idea to go to Palghat. So we settled down in Palghat. Malayalam I didn’t know—language was a problem. I was studying in school, so language was a problem for me—it was Malayalam medium—so, I didn’t know any Malayalam. So they arranged a tuition for me. So, we went to Palghat.

DN: Was Mani Iyer there then?

RR: Yes, he was there, fortunately (laughter) I must say I was very fortunate, because when I went there he was a little free.

DN: And you were what—sixteen, seventeen years old then?

RR: No, I was...fifteen—fourteen or fifteen.

DN: What was it like? Did you go to his house?

RR: (laughs) Oh, you want me to go in all details?

DN: As much as you feel like, yeah.

RR: (laughing) See, my impression of Palghat Mani Iyer before meeting him was, I was myself a little doubtful whether he would teach me at all, because he is such a great man. I don’t think I will be fortunate enough to learn under him—that was my feeling. So, my grandfather—see, he was not only a self-made man but a very independent man. He would not tolerate any—(laughs) discipline is the only important thing for him.

So when we went to Palghat Mani Iyer’s house, he was playing cards with his friends. Before that, my grandfather’s friend already had spoken to Palghat Mani Iyer saying, “My friend’s grandson is very much interested, he shows good promise—you should teach him.” “He can come, we will see.”
We went there, my grandfather was sitting, they were playing cards; then this gentleman who had spoken to him before said, “They have come.” “Today it’s too late—you come tomorrow”, he said.

That confirmed my suspicion. The whole night I didn’t sleep—I was crying. My grandfather said, “You don’t cry—I am responsible for that. I will see that you learn under Palghat Mani Iyer. You don’t worry, you sleep.” (chuckles) The whole night I didn’t sleep. The next day—see, daily school—my parents are very strict about my schooling, you know? They won’t allow me to take even a day off. One day gone. “You come tomorrow”, he said. Next day also gone. The same thing—we went, they were playing cards. Then a gentleman who came there, you know—he brought some sweets—he is a friend of Palghat Mani Iyer—and he saw me and he asked Palghat Mani Iyer, “Who is this young boy?” “He has come to study.” “He is very smart—you teach him”, he said.

DN: You hadn’t even opened your mouth...

RR: No, no. No one has opened anything. “Good beginning”, he said. He gave me some sweets, that halvah, and he asked me to play. I played what Tinyarn had taught me. By that time I could play a tani āvartanam in ādi tāla—small tani āvartanam. He listened to it—he said “What is there to teach him? He already plays.” When he said that, I was completely off.

Then my grandfather said, “You should not say like that—what does he know? We have come all the way—losing everything in Burma. And this is the only hope for us—this is our ambition in life—that you should teach him—you should accept him as your student.” Then, “Again you come tomorrow (Palghat Mani Iyer).” “Tomorrow what time?” “Afternoon, twelve o’clock” So school—gone. We had a separate house for teaching—he had a separate house for him to take rest, teach students—there were students living in that house, you know—eating in his house...

DN: But you were staying with your family...
RR: Yes, yes. I went there at twelve o’clock; he had gone to his house for eating. Then I was waiting there—he came back. “Oh, you have come. All right—you take some rest.” I didn’t know what’s going to happen. I should take rest—what is there, take rest—what did I do? And he took some rest, a nap for half an hour or one hour. “Okay come, we will go to our house”, he said. Next day he asked me to come. “We will go to our house”, he said.

He took my grandfather and me—we were all entertained for good tiffin, coffee and everything. Upstairs there was a tambūra, carpets, everything, and his teacher, my teacher’s teacher—two, three teachers were sitting, and he asked his father to sing. Now what I feel is, he just wanted to know how much I can accompany. I played a solo—he felt he can teach me, standard is okay—he just wanted to know how I am able to accompany music. And I have not accompanied anyone—just in my house I used to listen to all the songs. So I was just accompanying, and he sang a song in miśra cāpu—this was something very difficult for me (laughs).

DN: Was that less common?

RR: It was something new for me, but still I was just managing, you know—he was happy about it—the way I was managing. See, that is the important thing—they didn’t expect me to play anything—but, the way I managed—the way I coped with it—that’s the thing he was very happy about, and the next day, “Okay, you come tomorrow 12 o’clock.” Then he changed my fingering. He said, “Your fingering is okay—you can play this way also, but if you change your fingering it will be beneficial for you on some occasions”, he said. He didn’t insist on it. “It’s better if you can”—so, just one day. “Come tomorrow”—school gone here—one week gone. (laughs)

DN: (laughing) You weren’t going to school because you were so particular about getting a lesson?

RR: Yes. So my father and grandfather—see, for him to accept me itself was a big problem. And how to tell him, “He is studying in the school”—whether we
should say that—in those days whatever you say you should be very careful, because we had a feeling that all artists are very temperamental, you know. You should not say anything—if he is disturbed he will not teach me. My grandfather didn’t know whether to tell him “He is studying in school” or not—he was just thinking about it. So next day he asked me to come at twelve o’clock, I went there, the same thing—went to his house for lunch, came back, “Take rest”—next day I didn’t have that lesson also! First day he taught me change the fingering and couple of phrases he taught me, “Just practice, it will be helpful for you.” Next day, just this nap and tiffin and coffee—nothing happening. I was...(laughs)

DN: You must have been going crazy!

RR: Then I thought, “What to do?” So, I had gone there at twelve o’clock, you know? At five o’clock a fair young man came. He said, “Okay, bring that sruti box, put a carpet, there is one instrument there—bring it. There is one kanjira—you bring that also.” Who that young man was—you know? K.V.Narayanaswamy. He was also just in his initial stages, undecided as to what to do, in that stage. He was teaching students. And my teacher was interested in him also.

So he asked him to sing, asked me to play. He played on the kanjira—and then it was nine o’clock at night. I didn’t know how to go back to my house—nine o’clock at night means no light—no street light—you have to go by walking. In those days no buses there—it is a typical village, you know? I was just wondering as to what I should do—how can I go alone? I can’t say that to him. Just when I was thinking like that, my grandfather came searching for me (laughs). Palghat Mani Iyer said, “Ohhh, too late, isn’t it?” “No, nothing.” “See, Narayanaswamy came, he sang, we played together, I taught him how to...” “Oh, very good—he can’t come back alone, so I came to take him back”, he said.

When I went home they asked me what happened—I said. “Oh, he also played?” Next day they all wanted to come with me—I said, “Please don’t
come (laughs). Slowly it has just now started—he has started teaching me, please don't make a big fuss." "No, no—we want to listen to him." I was really scared. Next day he also took the mṛdaṅgam—played on the mṛdaṅgam. On those two days he taught me how to play a tāni āvartanam—that's important. All these things are just talk, you know, but how to play a tāni āvartanam...

DN: By doing it himself...

RR: Yes—see, after one song he asked me to play—I didn't play. I wanted to listen to him play—he has already listened to my playing. I just kept quiet. "Just play", he said. I didn't say anything—I just kept quiet. Then he started—one beat he played—asked me to play—I played, then next beat—next beat—next beat, and in the end—"That's all." Then—he had so many students learning under him, staying there, all older than me. Some students would come—twenty-five, thirty. Then he used to ask me "Teach them." He would just play what I should teach them, and I must teach them—he will just watch there, how I teach. And he would tell me, "Teaching is very important."

DN: This happened from the beginning? He did that with you?

RR: Yes! I would teach them, he would watch, and tell me how to teach. One day what he did was—he was testing me from all angles—he played four kōrvais at a stretch. "I will play something—you just watch me", he said. So he played four kōrvais in ādi tāḷa. "Did you understand this?" "Yes." "Can you play?" "Yes." "Then play." I played all the four.

DN: You heard it one time and you were able to do it.

RR: Yes, yes. So he was happy. He didn't say that outside, but he was just testing me, what is my grasping capacity—teaching—those days Tanjore Vaidyanatha lyer used to have students teach them like that. There is no such teaching here. Mainly he used to set all these fundamentals—fingering and all that—he didn't have time, also. Fortunately for me, when I went there he was a little free. That's why I got all these—you know?
Mostly I had to listen, and in Palghat, concerts were a very rare thing. So I had to listen to the radio, and practice—listen and practice, and whenever he came he would ask me to play. This Narayanaswamy and myself, we would go twenty, twenty-five days at a stretch. Then he used to just sit and ask—he won’t play—just sit, and “You sing, you play”—used to listen to us, and he would correct him, correct me, like that it happened. It’s mostly your listening. The teaching, just like in the schools, you know—this theorem, that theorem, no—nothing like that. Just listen and steal—it is a stealing art, that’s what I feel. You must be very alert—not only listen, you must immediately grasp. In those days, no tape recorders or anything—once you listen, you have to grasp it and just put it in your mind—otherwise you lose. Do or die.

DN: Because it’s only going to happen once. There’s a lot of pressure.

RR: Yes—pressure. So, with that in mind we used to be very alert—you have to grasp it completely.

DN: Now, on the radio you heard Palghat Mani Iyer, you heard Palani Subramania Pillai...

RR: Oh yes—in those days we had many—in the mornings we used to have concerts—7:45 to 9:00 daily we used to have in the external services radio. I listened to radio daily. In the radio we used to listen Palani Subramania Pillai.

DN: And his approach was different...

RR: Yes, yes.

DN: Did it interest you?

RR: Oh yes—in fact, as I mentioned in that SRUTI, once I have listened to Palani Subramania Pillai accompany Alathur Brothers in the radio, and he played a solo in miśra cāpu. The way he planned it, I was very much attracted to it. Immediately I just took it, and I went to the bathroom (laughs).

DN: Ranga also used to do that...
RR: I didn’t come out for one hour. They started searching for me. I said, “Don’t worry, I am here.” Then I just arranged it in my mind. And the very next week after my listening to it, I was to play a concert here with GNB. And Palani Subramania Pillai had heard there is a boy playing he should listen to, and he came for that concert. “I have heard so much about you, I have come to listen to you”, he said. “Whatever I play, you bless me”, I said. When he came, I wanted GNB to sing a piece in míśra cāpu because I wanted to play what he had played. That was working in my mind.

DN: Did you ask him to do that?

RR: No, no. I couldn’t do that—see, GNB was a very great man, and I was just getting started—for me to get to play for him was itself a big opportunity for me, so I couldn’t do that. Fortunately, he sang a piece in míśra cāpu, and I played the tāni—mainly I played all the items he played in that solo on the radio. He was so happy!

DN: I’ll bet...

RR: And after the concert I had to go somewhere—I got the train and went back, but he went to GNB’s house and he was talking to him until 4 o’clock in the morning. And GNB told me, “What did you do—you have mesmerized him—he came to my house and ’til 4 o’clock in the morning he was talking about you.” So I was able to grasp it and play. “If I was able to play it correctly as he wanted it to be played, I am happy”, I said. After the concert he came and blessed me and said, “Whenever you come to Madras you must come to my house.” I used to go to his house, and whenever I would go to his house, you know, I would go at 10 o’clock in the morning, he would go on until 2 or 3 in the afternoon, talking, talking about gurus, and in the olden days what they did. I was able to talk to him more freely than my teacher.

DN: Of course, because he wasn’t your teacher.
RR: Anyway, my teacher is related to me also—I married his niece—but still I wouldn’t talk to him (laughs). Palani Subramania Pillai liked me so much, I was a little more free with him.

DN: It’s important to have friends like that. Did your teacher make you, ask you to compose things?

RR: One thing with them is, they would never ask you anything straight. They will just give you an indication. Very little they will just indicate you, you have to just find out. That’s the difficult thing—they won’t ask you frankly. But after I had been learning for some time he asked me, “Did you compose anything?” I had composed something, just like the one he had composed. And I showed him and said I have composed this, please see whether it is... “Mm”—that’s all. He would just listen to my playing—they wouldn’t ask anything.

Those days, this guru-siśya relating—I will tell you one incident. In those days to get an offer from Music Academy was something very difficult. If you played at the Music Academy you would be known everywhere. My first concert in the Music Academy was in 1944 when I was sixteen years of age. Immediately there was a good report in the papers, sabhā people wrote to me, asking me to come for concerts, like that it started. I got known to people. In those days they used to have these demonstrations in the afternoon— evening, concerts.

One day they used to do for Purandara Dasa, one day for Swati Tirunal, or a pallavi demonstration. So when I come to Madras, my teacher was staying here—I used to stay there. One day, after a concert—generally, after the concert, they used to relay the concert (on the radio)—he will go to sleep, and we will listen to that concert again. One day he called me after the concert, after we had finished our dinner—he never used to call me like that. “Have you finished your dinner?” “Yes” “Okay, we will go out”, he said. “Okay” Next day he was to play for a demonstration of five pallavis—for Alathur Brothers—you know, they are famous for pallavis. They were
supposed to sing five pallavis in five different gatis—jatis.

They were staying in a friend’s house—that friend is friend to all the musicians, you know. So he took me there, and asked them to sing those five pallavis. They sang those five pallavis at a stretch—I just grasped them. We came back. Next day the demonstration was supposed to start 12 o’clock, and he called me at 11 o’clock. “Do you remember those pallavis?” he asked me (laughs). He just wanted to find out whether I have grasped them.

DN: So you remembered all five of them.

RR: Yes. He was just testing me. Even if he doesn’t remember he can play. For me, he wants to know whether I have listened to those pallavis, and how far I have grasped. Then “Can you sing?” I just kept the tālam and sang all those five pallavis. And some pallavis I was taking extra care, that I should not slip. He said “Don’t get that way, relax a little. What is there?”

And one more incident I wanted to tell you. There was a concert by the Alathur Brothers in a nearby village—a marriage. The Alathur Brothers had come to Burma, so I knew them from there itself. Somebody said, here is a small boy playing, why don’t we fix him up for this concert? “Can he cope up with the Alathur Brothers?” “Let us ask them.” And they asked them, and they said “Oh yes, why not?” because I was known to them, so I got that opportunity. Ten days before that marriage concert they had come there for another concert with Palani Subramania Pillai. On that day they sang a pallavi in khaṇḍa jāti tripuṭa—four subdivisions each bar—thirty-six divisions, pallavi starting a quarter-beat after the little finger.

DN: So after five?

RR: After five—exactly. They did all this anuloma, pratiṣṭoma, everything—I didn’t know what was happening. For this marriage somebody said, “You sang that pallavi on that day—we want to listen to that pallavi.” They were slowly looking at me. I said “You can sing—but you tell me what that pallavi
is; if you can tell me I will try—I must also learn.” “Ah, are you sure?” “Yes.” I
was a little free with them because I knew them.

So immediately after breakfast that gentleman went away, and they asked
me, “Are you serious?” “Yes, I am serious”, I said. They sang to me that
pallavi—immediately I just grasped that pallavi. I was a little hurt, you see,
when they—I just wanted to surprise them. They were to sing only three
speeds, and I wanted to play tiśram also. I must surprise them. I was
confident that I could do that. So after the lunch, you know—all the
musicians after lunch they used to have a nap. I was studying in school—no
nap for me, so I wouldn’t miss it. So I just took that pallavi and was working
on it, you know, and one of the brothers was not sleeping. “What are you
doing?” “Nothing” “No, you are doing something, what is it?” “No, that
pallavi—I thought I can do tiśram also.” “What? Can you?” “Yes.” I did, and
also second speed without difficulty.

DN: So five kālas...

RR: They were surprised. They said “Yes, second speed you did...” They wanted
to teach me—that was the attitude. When they saw that I could do tiśram on
the spot, they were testing me. “You must do tiśram first, second, third
speed.” So automatically I started, but if you do one time first speed, second
speed, third speed, you won’t arrive at the spot. You have to do some
adjustment ...

DN: Right, you get seven if you do that...

RR: Yes, I didn’t notice that, I just started...

DN: You’d have to do the third speed twice...

RR: Yes, but they said, “You should do only once.” I said “I cannot do that”. They
said “For that you should do the second speed twice, third speed once, and
then one, two, three.” That’s a bit difficult, because second speed twice and
first speed once, and jump to first speed...
DN: Very difficult...

RR: I did it. They were very happy. And in the concert also, I played very well, they were very happy. They went to my teacher. "He will do it", he said (laughs). So this learning process is like that, you know. Just any opportunity you get—any concert is such an opportunity, a learning experience for you, especially in the initial stages. Even now—like that go on, building up, expanding your knowledge, listen...

DN: Did you have other influences on your playing? For example, did you listen to bharata nātyam drummers?

RR: Very late. Balasaraswati's drummer Kuppuswamy—very great. I first listened to him here in the Music Academy, in śaṅkīrṇa naḍăi he played something. I was surprised—for a dance drummer to play with such ease, and there was something spontaneous in his playing. And his drum was so small, but the sound he was able to bring out in that drum, the right and left coordination—I was simply astonished. And my teacher saw me and asked, "Did you listen to that drummer? He is a very good drummer." And the next day I wanted to meet that Kuppuswamy. So I had known Viswa very well by then—and my meaning was to listen to Bala's dance, and the music, her mother Jayammal's music in that concert, but this drumming! I was so impressed. I told him, "I want to meet him." Next day I went to Bala's house.

DN: Did you meet him?

RR: Yes, I asked him (about that śaṅkīrṇa), but he didn't know...

DN: He wasn't able to talk about it?

RR: No. See, he was a player with—we call Īkṣya—see, whatever he does he can do—and Jayammal's music, that is something—that dance, that music, everything—Viswa. That was really an experience.

DN: Were there any other dancers who had anything going like that, or was she the only one in that category?
RR: I have not gone to any other dance.

DN: Did you see her frequently?

RR: Not frequently, but the only dance I have seen is Bala.

DN: What do you think made her so special?

RR: Everything she did was perfect. I don’t know much about dance. But all complicated rhythmical stuff she was doing with such ease, and her music was so beautiful. It was a mixture of all—rich and beautiful. And also when I was in Berkeley, she was also there working, and she used to invite me to her house, and once, like that when we were talking, she recited a thing in śaṅkīrṇa naḍai, and she did it in three speeds with absolute ease. I was simply surprised. I was so happy—such a great artist. Everything—such rigorous training she must have had, you know? Otherwise I don’t know anything about dance.

DN: Who else did you listen to? Did you listen to tavil players?

RR: Yes, Nidamangalam Minakshisundaram Pillai. I was not too knowledgeable then. Then in Palghat we used to have that temple car festival—they used to invite all these nāgasvāram players and tavil players. I have listened to many. They interest me a lot.

DN: They have a different approach to the whole thing—do you use any of those ideas?

RR: A little, not much.

DN: It’s a different approach. But I remember one time when we were talking, you said there were times, for example, that you took ideas from a band you heard in the street.

RR: Yes, yes—not band. The month of December is a very auspicious month for us...all these temple festivals. In those days that one month of December
they used to have this procession of bhajans in the early morning. You know that great composer Papanasam Sivan? He used that Kapali temple—that temple he used to sing early morning through thirty days. If you want to listen to Papanasam Sivan...

DN: You go there.

RR: Yes. Similarly in my village, there was no Papanasam Sivan there, still they used to sing this āṣṭapati. And most of these āṣṭapatis are in slow mīśra cāpu. It’s group singing, bhajan—you know? but they don’t have a specialist drummer for that. And also, even if they have, the drummer will not carry the drum—it’s too heavy. He will just take a kanjira, and just keep time with that, and each āṣṭapati when it ends, he won’t know how to end it. He doesn’t know any körvai or any such thing—he just plays with lakṣya...

\[ ta - - din - din - din - din - [ta] \]

He ended like that. For each āṣṭapati,

\[ ta - - din - din - din - din - [ta] \]

he ended like that. This

\[ ta - din - din - din - din - [ta] \]

started working in my mind. I just reframed it a little and composed.

DN: How did it come out?
RR:

ta - ku din - gu din - gu din - gu di na
din - gu din - gu din - gu din - gu di na
di din - din - gu din - gu din - gu di na
din - gu din - gu din - - t k t n k din g d n

I started working like that, and composed a complicated kôrvai in that, and played that in December in the Music Academy. A couple of musicians with good rhythmic sense, they came. "You did something in miśra căpu—what is that?" I was simply laughing. "That bhajan player was my guru", I said. So anything that happens, you can get something out of it.

DN: And teaching also gives you ideas.

RR: Oh yes. Teaching is something which I really enjoy very much. Not only that, I benefit so much by that, because I take it as a challenge. Suppose a student—if I teach him something and he just doesn't come to my expectations, he is very slow, I take it as a challenge. I must see that he gets it. I will approach from a different...exercises for that, and I will see that he gets it.

DN: And you mentioned once that sometimes in the course of teaching somebody, you get an idea for a composition.

RR: Oh yes!

DN: Can you give me an example of that? Are you willing?

RR: (laughs) It's difficult to all of a sudden do something...

DN: Sure, sure.

RR: In other words, you know I just compose something on the spot and teach him. After coming across his difficulty, I just think about what can I do to avoid
that—get him rid of that difficulty, and I concentrate on that portion where he has that difficulty. I emphasize that aspect and compose something and give to him.

DN: When you say compose something you mean a sarvalaghū, and some setup for a cadence...

RR: Yes—suppose it has to come one after, or caturaśra, or tiśra, whatever it is. I just explain to him, and do a simple aspect of that. See, I had problems with students—this one after, two after, three after. Two after is very easy—one and three after are very difficult. So I composed

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{ta ka di mi ta ka di mi ta ka di mi ta ka di mi} \\
&\text{ta ka di mi ta ka di mi ta ka di mi ta ka ta ki ta} \\
&\text{ta ka di lmi ta ka di lmi ta ka di lmi ta ka di lmi} \\
&\text{ta ka di lmi ta ka di lmi ta ka di lmi ta ka ta lki ta} \\
&\text{ta ka ki mi ta ka ki mi ta ka ki mi ta ka ki mi} \\
&\text{ta ka ki mi ta ka ki mi ta ka ki mi ta ka ta ki ta} \\
&\text{ta lka di mi ta lka di mi ta lka di mi ta lka di mi} \\
&\text{ta lka di mi ta lka di mi ta lka ta ki ta [ta]}
\end{align*}
\]

DN: That solves a lot of problems, I'm sure...

RR: Yes, but takes time. First when they do 'ta ka ta ki ta' they slip there. So I just ask them to make the speed a little slow. See,
You can have as a chain, you know? For three, three interval—four, four interval—five, five interval.
For five, five interval—seven, seven interval—nine, nine interval. It is very easy to remember, and you can solve many problems with this. Like that I used to...

DN: In mathematics that's called elegance. Doing more with less.

RR: Once I teach them, I forget. That's a problem. That's why I tell them, just remember—otherwise, I will find it out, but it will take time. On that day, see, coming across his difficulty I do something, and teach him, just to see that he does not have that difficulty. After that I forget—that's the problem.

DN: Okay, we've talked about where you come from and how you think of it. If you want to we can go right to the solo that you played that day.
TRICHY S. SANKARAN
FIRST INTERVIEW: SEPTEMBER 30, 1989

DN: Today we're going to interview Professor of Music Trichy S. Sankaran of York University in Toronto, by way of Madras. Mr Sankaran is unique among the subjects of this project for several reasons: one is that he is, by all definitions, an emigrant from India; he has pretty much settled on this continent. He is teaching in Canada at a prominent University, and has seen no diminishing of his reputation in India as a musician; in fact, you're probably more in demand when you go back now.

You're also completely unique in this study, because nobody else I've interviewed, and none of the other people at your level, was a student of Palani Subramania Pillai. That part is, of course, special to me since my teacher was also very close to your guru. I'd like to start this out by thanking you for doing this—I'm very happy that you're here.

SS: Well, it's my pleasure to be part of your project. I have always thought of helping students; I teach both graduate and undergraduate students at York University, and many students at the M.A. level have consulted me on musical topics pertaining to Indian music. Especially a person like you, who have been working so hard, and have been studying with Ranga for so long, and whom I have known for a long time; now that you are at the point of completing your dissertation, I thought I should give you as much assistance as possible.

DN: Thank you, that's wonderful. If we can go all the way back to the beginning, I'd like to know it all; the date of your birth, and where you were born, and what it was like to be a child in Madras in those days...

SS: Okay. Are you planning to have a birthday party? (laughter) I was born on the twenty-seventh of July, 1942, in a village called Puvalu, about fifteen
miles from Trichy—Trichurapalli. That's where I was born, but I mostly grew up in Trichy, until I finished what we call S.S.L.C.; that's equivalent to the twelfth or thirteenth year. Probably you are more interested in my musical training.

DN: Well, that started while you were still in Trichy, so that's a good way to keep us in Trichy for the moment, sure.

SS: I started learning mṛdaṅgam from my cousin, the only musician in our family, Puvalu Sri A. Venkataraman, at the age of seven. I studied with him until the point—let's see—I started in the year 1949, and then he moved to Delhi to take a teaching position in late 1951, or early 1952. Having started under him, and having been working so hard in learning mṛdaṅgam, he didn't want me to discontinue or have any disruption of my studies because he had to move to Delhi. He insisted—of course I was too young to understand these things, so he approached my parents, and said, "Sankaran ought to be sent to Delhi to continue his studies with me." So I went to Delhi and studied with him intensively for one whole year. Still, those days are very nostalgic to me because they bring all the memories back. I was doing nothing but playing mṛdaṅgam; nothing but playing mṛdaṅgam, for one whole year.

DN: No school?

SS: No school. Well, he wanted to put me in school; he didn't want to disrupt my school education either, but the day he went to pay my school fee—he was such an emotional person—they said "It's lunch time; it's closing time—please bring your fee at two o'clock in the afternoon." I was like a son to him, so he said "What is this? This is the first time I am bringing this kid to your school and you are simply refusing to take him now? It's not a good sign—I don't want this school, I don't want him to study in this school. He will be a master musician!" So he decided just to give me mṛdaṅgam lessons.

It turned out to be a great year for me. I studied mṛdaṅgam, and just to supplement my training he asked me to take some vocal lessons, so I
studied with two teachers from the Delhi Shanmukananda Sangita Sabha, from whom I had my initial vocal training.

DN: Was that a group of South Indian people who got together to maintain South Indian-style musical ideas within that North Indian city?

SS: Good question. If my memory serves right, that was the first time they ever thought of starting a sabhā, to offer music lessons to kids in the families. The sabhā was probably already functioning, featuring concerts on a regular basis; maybe there was some other sabhā also, but to my knowledge the S.S.S. was the one which also advertised teachers of percussion giving lessons in mṛdaṅgam. That's how my teacher ended up (in Delhi)—that too, he did not apply directly. In his family, his brother happened to apply, because his father was so concerned that his son get a steady job and things like that—knowing the uncertainty of his profession. He went there very reluctantly; I remember days when he was talking (about it) with my great guru, the late Sri Palani Subramania Pillai. However, Sri Palani encouraged him to take the job. If at any time he found the job not to his satisfaction he could leave it and come back, but because it was his guru's advice, he took it seriously and he went there.

At the interview, it's very interesting to mention—normally, any music teacher would be asked to play something for the panel, or whoever was judging whether to take that person. He said, "I am not going to play; you are asking me to be a teacher—here is a student, Sankaran will play." This happened in Madras, before he took his job in Delhi. They didn't need anything else. "What else do you need? I have produced a wonderful student." "We want a person like you to come as a teacher."

DN: And at this point, you'd been studying with him for about two years. You were nine years old. Do you remember what those lessons were like? Not how you felt, but what you actually played?
SS: Yes—in fact, I would say maybe two (years) and a bit, because it was the end of 1951. So within that two to three year period, I had already completed miśra cāpu tāla lessons; all the basic lessons, from ta di tom nam

up to

tam - - - ta - ta - di - na -

that series.

I was taught the caturaśra paḍam, what we call the ādi tāla lessons, the tiśra paḍam, or rūpakā tāla lessons; then the cāpu tāla lessons, the miśra paḍam. Just then, he had started the khaṇḍa paḍam also...

It might be of interest, therefore I want to mention a couple of instances which I consider very valuable in my lifetime; that is, the first time I saw my great guru, the late Sri Palani Subramania Pillai.

The whole house was up in great momentum; everybody trying to clean up the place, and saying “Palani is coming! Palani is coming to the house!” And we were living in a small house in the same street in Trichy. Everybody was saying he was coming at four o’clock, so they were preparing tiffin; enormous food, a great variety of things. In the meantime, I was being asked to practice, practice—“You are going to play before him. You must practice and be prepared.” I didn’t know, I hadn’t even seen this person. I just went on practicing; finally—I was very curious also, as a little boy, to see who this man was the whole street was talking about—I was very curious.

Then here comes this—to me, at the time, he was a giant figure; very tall, very fair-looking, hair neatly combed, with a beautiful khadar dhoti, khadar shirt with a long angavastram, and two diamond earrings, and a mouth full of
betel leaves and tobacco. I was just looking at him. So everybody paid respects to him, and he was given the best seat possible in the house. Then after some conversation, he turned and asked my cousin Venkataraman, “I want to listen to that boy. Do you want him to play now?” So a small mṛdaṅgam was brought. At that time, this was after six months or a year, I would say, I was asked to play the

tam - - - ta - ta - di - na -

series and also the ādi tāla lessons. He was paying full attention, and listening to me very seriously, and he was very happy about the way I was playing. I still remember that he was so inspired that he asked my cousin “Bring that mṛdaṅgam”, as soon as I finished playing the

tam - - - ta - ta - di - na -

series, and he just tried something, spontaneously, based on the same series.

DN: You must have been thrilled!

SS: I was thrilled. I even vaguely remember—I was playing probably faster, with my supple fingers, and he said, “Age is something. There are certain things that can only be done at a certain age, and I am happy to hear what he played today.” That’s all I can remember now. This was one of the greatest moments in my life; my first sight of my guru.

And then, when I was studying on my own the lessons that my cousin had given, before I went to Delhi, one afternoon around four o’clock one of the disciples of Palghat Mani Iyer came to the house. He said, “My master is in town. He would like the boy in this house who plays mṛdaṅgam to come and see him at Alathur Subba Iyer’s house. He would like to hear him play. That day I think I had gone to the cinema or something (laughs)
I came home by about six o'clock, and my pēṟappa, that is my cousin's father, said, "Of all the days, you should go to the movies today!" "I'm sorry if I did anything wrong." "That great man is in town—Palghat Mani Iyer is in town. He wants to hear you play. What are you going to play tomorrow? You'd better go to that room, take your mṛdaṅgām, and spend hours practicing! Tomorrow morning you have to be there at his house at nine o'clock."

So I was practicing hard, you know, sort of afraid. I went to Alathur Subba Iyer's house; and here comes another tall man, slightly different in complexion—and I was again curious, the same way I had been for my guru. He came into the main living room, and I did namaskāram, and he blessed me. "We'll listen to you play a little." I played—as I said, at that time I was nearing completion of my khanḍa cāḷā lessons. I played the lessons up to which I had gone through. Probably he might have been impressed, and he blessed me: "Keep well! Keep up your good practice."

Later on, years later, when I looked at these things, the revealing thing was, he was a great man; that showed the respect that Palghat Mani Iyer had for my guru...

DN: By that time were you studying with Palani Subramania Pillai?

SS: Not yet.

DN: So respect for the person you were studying with then?

SS: Yes, because he had already heard that there was—I believe in those days if somebody is very serious about his or her musical training, the whole town knows about it, and in the music circles it is talked about, and then this master is curious to find out who that boy is, and that was the kind of days. Now, looking back, what it revealed to me is the respect he had for Palani, and then also for my first teacher. My first teacher, Mr.Venkataran was very highly praised by both my guru Palani, and by Palghat Mani Iyer; he was known as a very good teacher. To continue, my training now back in
Delhi. After a full year of vigorous studies with my first teacher, Mr. Venkataraman, I was sent back to Trichy, because he realized that I could not be stopped from education; he believed in having a good education, and that the education should not be stopped on any account.

DN: And you had interrupted it at this point...

SS: Yes, for only that one year; he realized that I could not be kept in Delhi unless I was put back in school in Delhi. He decided that he had given me so much that I could work on my own, and then I could continue when he happened to be back in Trichy; that was his feeling at that time.

DN: At this time in India, was it the law that you had to go to school? or was it a conviction on the part of the people who brought you up that this was very important, and so they saw to it?

SS: Yes, conviction; especially on the part of my cousin. He himself had not studied beyond grade eight or nine...

DN: And he regretted that.

SS: He regretted that later on. There are other things—maybe we can come back to that later on. Because he had certain ideals and convictions about musical training as well, with regard to the whole ideal of guru
ulavāsam. He believed in training a proper student, and not to take advantage of a student—not to use him for menial service and things like that. He was very against—maybe it was around with some people at that time—he wanted to set an example where a student can be given a good musical training without foregoing his general education. I was the best example. Of course it's quite demanding on the part of the student as well.

At that point he decided that I should go back to Trichy and continue practicing mṛdaṅgam. He believed in this kind of discipline. I also believed, even though I had my moments—up and down—my own frustrations, too, in this kind of training. But deep inside something told me that these are all
disciplines, very hard to cope with; but if you learn to, I think it's going to be good for you. And indeed it turned out to be good; I think that discipline is still the base, in the continuation of my education, as well as my music.

So now I'm back in Trichy, working hard. In 1955, when I was thirteen years old, I made my debut with the famous Alathur Brothers at the Nandodayyan Pillayar temple in Trichy. Alathur Brothers, accompanied on the violin by Lalgudi G. Jayaraman.

DN: This is your arangetram?

SS: Yes, with my great guru, Palani Subramania Pillai. At this point I want to mention—after returning from Delhi I had lessons with my guru. In fact, very close to my arangetram. So actually, my serious studies with my grand guru Palani started only after my debut. So my hat's off to my first teacher, who prepared me so well.

DN: I would think it's very unusual for your arangetram to be in the company of a drummer who wasn't your teacher at that point.

SS: Very unusual. The only thing is he had already heard me, and had constantly been hearing about my progress, because there was lots of communication between my cousin and my guru. Every time he came to Delhi for concerts he heard me play, and then when I came to Madras, before the arangetram, I spent the whole summer there, studying with him, and then this arangetram was fixed. I even remember the date; twenty-second of September, 1955. There are certain that you don't forget in your life; your birthdate, your wedding date, your arangetram.

Here too, not much rehearsal—one of the disciples of the Alathur Brothers was asked to sing a couple of times for me. At that time, close to my arangetram date, I was very ill; I was in the hospital for a chronic stomach ache. Then I was brought back. They didn't want to change the date, because it was very auspicious, and anything you start new, for the first time,
you didn’t want to change; it’s not a good sign if you happen to change it. To top it off, on the day of the arangetram it was pouring like crazy; raining heavily. The organizers even thought of postponing it until the next day, but no. My guru Palani said, “No matter what—even if it takes until eleven o’clock tonight, we’re going to do it.”

It so turned out—usually the concert is held outside the temple, but it was raining so heavily that nobody could sit there; it was a flood. It was God’s will—the stage was set close to the Nandi, the bull god, facing the deity. Luckily, they got hold of a picture also; it’s in my living room. It’s a beautiful picture—the audience is so close, almost on top of the artists.

So that was a great thing in my life, and that too with my guru Palani I had just one rehearsal, the day before, because he arrived just two days before. Then he said, “Okay, if he wants to play certain things, it’s no problem”, because my cousin was kind of directing him about the way I was playing. I don’t know how I did it. Probably I was scared more of my first teacher, Venkataraman, than I was of the audience, so it was a very happy moment for me to look at the audience and play rather than look at my guru’s face.

The concert started about 10:30, and it went on until 1:30. At about four o’clock in the early morning, there was a bullock cart, from which this hefty man was getting down and coming to the house. Immediately the whole house woke up—my cousin got up and said “My God, that’s Alathur Subba lyer’s teacher and father, Alathur Venkatesa lyer. What is this, at this hour you are showing up?” “I couldn’t sleep after hearing that boy’s playing. I just wanted to come in person and congratulate you for having trained him.” And he was also delighted at the fact—not only the good playing—but for having trained another Telugu person. He was overwhelmed; they were talking and talking. I didn’t know why he was there; later on my cousin told me. In those days I wouldn’t be allowed to hear any compliments that people were making.

So that kind of sums up my training...
DN: The time before Palani Subramania Pillai.

SS: Right. However, I still want to make a mention of where my cousin studied. I think it's important. Before he actually studied under Sri Palani, he was a student of Mylathur Sami Iyer—he went to Chidambaram, to study at Annamalai University. At that time, he was also very fond of Palghat Mani Iyer's playing—not that he didn't continue to have those feelings later on; he did have. To him they were like two eyes.

So he came under the influence of the Tanjore school, if I may say, because Mylathur Sami Iyer represented the Tanjore school; he was a contemporary of Tanjore Vaidyanatha Iyer. After studying with Sami Iyer for some time, he was directed to study under Palani Subramania Pillai. From what I have heard from my cousin, my first teacher, it was Tiger Varadacharya who recommended him to continue his studies. I don't know why he didn't continue with Sami Iyer alone, but with his permission he joined Palani Subramania Pillai.

So after my arangetram, at that point I was still in high school. I would go to Madras to study with Palani during the summer time. Soon he encouraged me to play duos; concerts with him, which is considered one of the rarest privileges a student gets. I was one of the very few students of Palani to get this—I guess I got the maximum number of chances to...

DN: I've heard some recordings of those; they're astonishing.

SS: Even by 1956, the very first concert I played with Semmangudi was with my guru I have accompanied all the leading artists of that time, and also all the leading artists who happen to continue to this time; Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, Alathur Brothers, GNB, M. Venkatramiyer, Musiri Subramaniam, Madurai Mani Iyer, I should include others. Great moments in my career—here again, after I finished my grade thirteen, my guru Palani asked me to come to Madras—“Enough. No more school. You have already started playing with me, you have been showing up every summer.” On occasions
when he happened to be around Trichy, or nearby I'd be asked to go and join him...

It's very interesting to mention that we wouldn't have had any rehearsals—honestly. I'd be assisting him with his drums. Probably in later years he had so much confidence in me that if I checked the toppi for him he would be really pleased. He would be busy getting ready for the concert; he would have arrived that morning and he has to play that evening, so he would just ask me “Sankaran, why don't you check that mṛdaṅgam?” But I had learned the way my master handled the drum. I wouldn't touch it hard, or play cāpu or araī cāpu to break the spot—I would be really afraid, because of the fact that it's a concert drum—it's my master's drum. Probably he was pleased at that way I was checking.

And then he would look at me—say it was two o'clock, and the concert will start at 5:30—“Why don’t you also play with me?” I would be thrilled inside, but very nervous. “But I don't even have a good drum.” I couldn't say no—sometimes I felt like saying, “No, I don't know what to play. What do you want me to play?” but the way we were raised, no questions asked. So immediately I would run to the repairer; one of the mṛdaṅgams from a previous concert, maybe just slightly (in need of repair)—“Would you please set this right for me? I have to play with the master.” He will make it right for me, and we will have the drum ready.

Very serious moments at the concert stage. He would simply nod; show a sign with a head gesture; soon I learned that means I have to play with him. “Now, you cut off; I continue. You listen”—that kind of thing.

DN: Did that happen during accompaniment passages? What he expected you to do was double what he was doing? play what he was playing?

SS: No. Some sections I would be asked to play alone; he will say “Now you take it.” Sometimes he would start the anupallavi, and I would be asked to join him, and simply double that, you know, synchronize, go along with that.
DN: And if he left you alone, did he leave you alone until he felt he wanted to take it a different direction?—not to say you’re making a mistake, but to say that’s enough in this in this direction; now from there we go here.

SS: Okay, coming to think of it, I would start with certain patterns—many times it met with his approval; he liked it. But whenever he wanted to change direction, immediately he would give a head sign, or through his eyes. And then, “Look what I am playing now—take it from here.” He would just guide me like that.

DN: Those are the best lessons.

SS: The best lessons. Where do you get such lessons? This way I had the greatest opportunity of playing with senior musicians in the field, and that too with my guru. It was not easy by any means.

DN: How much time would you say you actually sat down with him for lessons? It sounds like a lot of your learning was done on the stage.

SS: Yes. Even though I had had my debut in 1955, I was also on my own, playing junior concerts, trying to establish my name in the field. When I was actually in Palani’s house, I was actually the senior student, and he would ask me to teach all of his students.

DN: When you say ‘in his house’, did you actually stay with him?

SS: Yes, I did. The whole year I lived there.

DN: Just for one year?

SS: Then I happened to continue—just to complete that part, my cousin and my father were very much in favor of me continuing with my college education and higher studies, but my guru Palani said no. When my father once went to convince him personally, my guru asked him, “Don’t you have faith in me? I assure you that he will be a good mrdangam player. Who else do you want to hear this from?” Then my father would say, “The modern days are
different; we don’t know our future.” So it took a lot of convincing on my father and my cousin’s part. And then he said, “On the condition that he continues his education in Madras. He should go to college in Madras, and he should do nothing but—after going to school, he should show up here every evening, and morning before school.” So that was the discipline; I lived in Madras the entire time.

DN: You didn’t have time for anything else.

SS: No, nothing. That’s why—don’t ask me any question about football, or cricket—I don’t know anything.

DN: When you were staying with him, and going to his house, did he sit you down individually for lessons? or were there always several students there?

SS: Occasionally, individually—especially the year I spent with him; one whole year without education. I discontinued my studies at that point. That was again another remarkable year, like the year that I spent with my cousin. This was 1959; I finished my high school in 1958. In 1959 I had been playing with all the top-ranking musicians.

At that point what would happen—if he found something serious about making corrections in my playing, he would talk about it in the house. Oftentimes during my teaching in the master’s house, sometimes he would overhear. Normally I would avoid the hours when he would be up; I would try to finish all the lessons by nine or ten o’clock in the morning—he used to get up late in the morning—this is later in his life.

I remember one concert; I was playing that evening with my master for Sri Semmangudi, with Chowdiah accompanying, at Krishna Gana Sabha. I was working some ideas in miśra cāpu, tiśra naḍai. I played it in certain ways; the other students were keeping tāḷa for me. This was just as part of my lessons too, like any teacher getting inspired, so I would also in this way prepare for my concerts when other students are listening. He played the same idea (in the concert).
DN: (laughing) He was awake!

SS: He was awake, but the thing was, he slightly twisted that around and showed me "Wouldn't it sound nice if you played it this way?" That was the thing I got from that.

DN: Ranga told a similar story, about ideas he played, except in this story he had played something in a radio concert that your guru heard; when he came to the house he demanded that Ranga play that one. He played it, and he didn't say anything at all; just "Hm", and then played it in the concert the next night. But I think that's really a validation of what you're doing. It shows you that you're on track. That man had to have a very great spirit to do that.

SS: Not only that, what he was showing was certain aesthetics, I believe. In later years, you know I can put these things together and see why he did it that way, because now I am in a position to talk about the aesthetics of playing. Nothing was wrong in what I was playing—he would also show me, "Look, there is another way to play these things." It was remarkable.

So he also gave me individual lessons; oftentimes, do you know where? At the Marina Beach.

DN: At the beach?

SS: I was the youngest of all the disciples in his house, so I was the only one allowed to go when he went with his wife to the beach. But what did he do at the beach? He would be sitting somewhere composing some kōrvai, while his wife would be watching the waves and tides; you know, looking at the ocean. And he would normally find a secluded place—it wasn't the way it is now. It was much nicer. He would find a quiet spot...Anyhow, that's where I had my lessons. But sometimes he would ask me where I was at eleven o'clock at night. I was an early bird, so I had to go to bed early—not too late at night—and he would call me; "Hey, where is that kōrvai? recite that." I
would be half asleep. "What is this? Is this the way you are learning?" Then I would wake up a little bit.

DN: Because he liked to stay up late, right?

SS: But for me it was very hard. And there again, whenever I was asked to play duos with him, he would very politely—because it is also important to tell the main artist that you are playing with your siṣya—I remember him saying to GNB before the concert (that I would be playing), and GNB "Palani ayya, if you say so, it must be right. Don't worry. Otherwise you wouldn't bring him." Those were remarkable moments.

And also, I remember a concert at the Rock Fort in Trichy with my guru, and I was so nervous I wasn't playing too well—I was really sweating. My teacher was not looking at me, and GNB turned to my side and said (quietly) "It's fine, play good, play good." It was very encouraging; I really needed some kind of support.

DN: And he wasn't able to give it to you then.

SS: I was afraid to face my guru; so it was coming from the artist.

DN: Why were you afraid to face him? It may sound like a stupid question, but what about him inspired fear?

SS: Actually I should say, it wasn't so much (him) as facing my own cousin. (laughter) He was my first teacher. I was brought up in such a way, sometimes I think out of my nervousness I was able to play fast—the fear, the look on his face made me really play! Whereas I learned to relax with Sri Palani. Even then...

It's hard to answer that question. It's something like, you know, when a kid is brought up—now I am able to analyze this way, because I have my children here, and I don't believe in certain kinds of upbringing—like with terror; that kind of thing, which I had gone through, which is not good. Psychologically, it
may affect. It also affected me, but luckily I have been able to overcome certain things.

So how do explain the fact that it really stays in your system? Even though you want to get rid of that and say to yourself, "What is this? You shouldn’t be afraid of this!"

DN: The threat is removed but the response is the same...

SS: Yes, exactly. This remained in my body, deep inside for a long time—with my cousin as well.

DN: Is your cousin still alive?

SS: No, he died a year ago; just last year. But he had physical ailments; he had a stroke—he too. Poor man, he suffered from that. He died last January; luckily, I was there in December, so I had a chance to see him. At that point he was not even able to communicate, but he asked me just to keep talking to him.

My other teacher, Sri Palani, died in 1962. I remember even fulfilling his concert; he was supposed to play with Semmangudi and Chowdiah in Bangalore. I was asked to play in his place, and I wasn’t at all up to that, because the whole family was surrounding him in the hospital—he was on his deathbed—I was not in the mood at all, but still I was asked to go, and I thought, “Here I am taking his place; let me go and bring a good name to him.” I felt it more a responsibility, and people said I stood up to that responsibility and played well.

DN: What made you decide to come over here?

SS: Okay, to Toronto, to Canada. This happened in the year 1971.

DN: From the time your teacher died to the time Jon Higgins called, were you pretty much just playing concerts and all that?
SS: Oh yeah. I was making my way up through the field, I was recognized as one of the top-ranking mrdanga players. From the time my teacher died I remember accompanying all the senior musicians, and by 1966 I also completed my M.A. because I also continued my studies; I didn’t stop my studies—I got my M.A. degree in Economics, not in Music, then became a full-fledged performer, against the will of my family—my father—not taking up a job as a Lecturer in Economics at Vivekananda College.

DN: How you could have stood that, I don’t know.

SS: Luckily, my Professor in Economics, Head of the Department, was against me taking up a professorial job, whereas my Principal said, “Here is a vacancy. You can apply; you are a product of this college and we will be happy to have you.” Then Professor Vasudevan, Head of the Department of Economics, said, “This is how GNB also once felt, after finishing his Honors—to go and seek a job—but no, you don’t belong here. You belong to the music field, if I may say.” Deep inside I was very happy he said that, but my father was very angry.

So I became a full-fledged performer, establishing my name, and my first trip abroad was in 1969, to play at the Shiraz Festival in Iran with Vina Doraiswamy Iyengar, and I had my tāla vādyakacceri with Palghat Sundaram and Shyam Sunder. That was my first trip abroad.

Now, looking back, it’s all very interesting facts. While I was doing my college, I was supporting myself only through my income from music. I come from a very poor family. I was even sending some money to my mother. At that time one American student was introduced to me by Viswa. I hadn’t even gone to Viswa’s place in Madras at that point. His name was Douglas Vurek. Viswa said, “He can’t pay you much.” At that time I was badly in need of money, so it helped take care of expenses.

I used to be a chronic absentee in the college, because if I didn’t go to
Kerala or Calcutta to play concerts, I wouldn’t be able to earn money to pay my tuition fee. Luckily, the college administration and staff were very understanding.

Douglas said, “There is another American guy who would like to come and sit during my lesson time with you.” I said, “Sure.” And here comes Jon Higgins. They were sharing a room or something. This was back in 1963 or ’64. He sat through the lesson, and we just said hello to each other. Then I came to know he was Viswa’s student. Then I remember at the Tiruvayaru Festival, there was a little note sent to me by someone saying “Would you consider playing with this American?” And I thought, ‘Who is this man singing Karnatak music?’ “No, I don’t want to play”, I said. Because I didn’t know…

Soon I heard about Jon Higgins’ singing; I even went to a concert. Jon was accompanied by Tyagu, Ranga, and Nagu. That was a wonderful concert. He surprised me with many things,” but still I did not compare him with any of the top-ranking artists of that time. Even when Jon was in India, I did not play for that many of his concerts. But in 1970, he called me on the phone and said, “Sankaran, I am an admirer of your playing; I’ve been coming to your concerts (which I had noticed). I’m singing a concert in Coimbatore, and I would very much like for you to accompany me.” I checked my date book and said “That’s fine, because I have a concert the previous day in Trichy; I can just take a train directly to Coimbatore; sure I will play.”

So that concert was really—that concert should have made something special about me; he admitted it later on. Then in the train we were talking, just general conversation, nothing special. We had one other concert, an All-India Radio performance. That day I remember I had a rehearsal to play with Vilayat Khan and Shanta Prasad—big concert the following day, so I was even late for the recording. After the concert, Jon said, “I need to talk to you something important.”
He came to my house, and said, "In Toronto we are going to start a World Music program. I have been invited, and I would like to go with a top-ranked mṛdaṅgam player like you." I didn't know where Toronto was, or what he was talking about. I said, "It sounds wonderful, but I need to be earning; unless it is something lucrative, I can't go. The second thing is, I don't want to be away for more than six months." (laughter) Don't look at me.

DN: (laughing) And the rest is history.

SS: Then I didn't hear from him—he said he was going to write to me—he left India in March, and I hadn't heard from him by June. In July a telegram shows up saying "Pleased to offer you a Visiting Artist position at York University."

Even before that—I think it's important to mention since I am at this very place, Wesleyan University—an ethnomusicologist, Dr. Robert Brown, met me at the Music Academy grounds after hearing me play for Semmangudi's concert. I don't know what gave him the idea of encouraging me to go to Wesleyan to do Ph.D. He invited me to come to his hotel room at the Woodlands, and he talked more about Wesleyan, and how he started the whole Curry Concert Indian program, which was very encouraging. Then he said, "With an educational background like yours, Sankaran, with a degree in Economics, and being a top-ranked mṛdaṅgam player, probably you would want to explore this area, wouldn't you?"

At that time I was very hesitant to ask all these questions, but what popped in my mind was, 'Here is an American talking about Indian music, and asking me to do Ph.D'—and bringing myself up to ask this question, "When I do my Ph.D, who will be judging my work—Americans?" "Of course, those who are knowledgeable in the field, and also Indian masters."

That kind of made me wonder about the whole thing. I'm speaking the honest truth. Then I said to myself, here is an art that has been studied and practiced for centuries here, and we are trying to make our name here, and
he’s talking about a panel that would judge my work, and offer a Ph.D. The Ph.D part sounds great, but I don’t know what he’s talking about. Beyond this I couldn’t ask any questions—I was afraid to, or I didn’t have the courage to ask. “I have to think about it.”

He said “You should make up your mind”, and said there would be a student stipend, but when I consulted with someone who had lived over here they said “This is a student’s stipend, I tell you Sankaran. The student’s life is very hard in America. It may appear to be a big amount, but it’s not so. Think about it.” In the meantime I had already received a letter from Professor Theodore Grame accepting me as a Ph.D. candidate on the recommendation of Bob Brown. So I was in a dilemma.

DN: Had you even applied for this?.

SS: At that point I had applied, because Professor Sambamoorthy gave a reference—but he was also saying, “Why do you have to go there?” But unfortunately nothing was offered at Madras University in those days. There was no place where a student could go and study toward a Music degree.

DN: Did you want to do that?

SS: I would have taken a Music degree instead of a degree in Economics. See my point? In those days it was only the Women’s College which was offering a degree in Music. Probably only recently, as I found out when I gave a series of lectures at Madras University—now they have the M.A. in Music; they even have Postal Tuition. The days I was growing up were different.

So I did finally apply, but when I was asked to make up my mind, because they were keeping that thing open for me, after hearing stories from people, I couldn’t make up my mind, and so I decided I wasn’t going to go. I thought I might like to go as a Visiting Artist or a teacher, rather than as a student. For one thing, I had already been a recognized artist in my field; why would I go as a student? I shouldn’t admit it, but at that time I had no idea of what this Ph.D involved, and how much work it needed, and what a student’s life was
here.

So when this opportunity came in 1971, this time I did not consult anybody. By this time I had already been married; I got married in 1969, and my first child, Bhavani, was just six or eight months old. I simply said to myself, maybe I should accept this offer and go. I did not consult anybody.

So it was Jon and I who first came to Toronto to start the South Indian program, which through all our efforts, did very well, and continues to do very well even after Jon's departure. There are all kinds of things I can talk about, in terms of the whole idea of structuring the program, in terms of teaching and so on. Even I asked the same question you are asking, David. I asked Jon one day, "Jon, what made you, out of all the mrdangam players, choose me to go with you to Toronto?" Do you know what he answered? "Sankaran, it's my good fortune." The point I was making was I was not even playing that often with Jon in India; only after coming to Toronto we became buddies, and family friends.

It was hard to adjust for me in the initial year. Coming from a different culture, and trying to adjust to the academic environment, and that too at the University level, was very different for me. In a way it was good that Jon would not hint me on anything; he just let me make my way through.

DN: He just let you fight it out?

SS: Exactly. I think he believed in that, which is good. I remember my first day—I was supposed to show up for my class. I had some morning tiffin at my friend's place, who was supposed to drop me. I didn't know directions in Toronto, and I had no car, so I had to wait for this man—the previous day I had played with Lalgudi and Ramani a concert in Toronto, so I was asked to join them. He promised to take me to the class on time, but somehow was delayed.

By that time the students had come—and gone! because I was late by a half
hour. I went to Jon's office and said "What is this?" Instead of sympathizing with me he said, "That's too bad, Sankaran." (laughter) So this showed he really wanted to make a point there, that you have certain academic responsibilities. That's not the case in India; students wait hours together to see the master. Little things like this; but there again, I gave the same thing back when one of his students showed up to my class—it was a common solkatţu class I introduced then. He came half an hour late. "How come you are half an hour late?", I asked him. "Jon tells that in India the teacher will be late." "You go tell Jon that it may be okay with him, but not with me. Remember, this is an Indian talking to you", I said (laughter).

Academic teaching opened up a whole new world to me. I don't know what made me learn to cope up with two things; the academic thing, on the one hand, and performance. Soon I started to notice the integration of the two. Because I believe as a teacher—now I'm talking after eighteen years at York University—a performing artist, what he plays outside is what he brings into the classroom. I believe in that. And this way, the things complement each other.

It was hard in the beginning. I remember Jon asking me one day to come and lecture for his class—for the first two years, he was looking after all the lecturing; I was asked mainly to take care of the performance classes—so I would hardly get up and give a lecture. I was continuing teaching in the Indian way, which was totally acceptable, and working fine, but maybe it was my educational background also which led me to get into some serious teaching, some analytical things—I will come back to that.

The very first year, I started talking about the necessity of notating drum strokes; I think it's one of the core subjects of the study. So Jon asked me one day to come to his class to talk about the mṛdaṅgam solo. I said, "You must be kidding. People don't talk about mṛdaṅgam solos. First of all, the solo happens in the middle of a concert following the kṛti, or composition, and we don't know what tālam it's going to be in, and what the eḻuppu is
going to be. That's how it's done, and here you are asking me to talk about the mṛdaṅgam solo in front of all the students." "Sankaran, I know you can do it. You will do a good job."

Okay, only three days, four days notice. There I walk into the classroom—you can even check this with Doug Knight; he happened to be there—people had their tape recorders on, and I said, "No. I myself don't know what I am going to be talking about. This is my first formal lecture on this subject, which is a very difficult subject, and not often spoken about. Kindly turn your tape recorders off." At the end of the lecture I realized that I should have made at least one to record that.

I stood by the blackboard—"How much do you know about tāḷa? You understand kaḷai? Okay, good. You know what is samam? graha, atīṭa and anāgata? because that's where the ēduppu takes place." I kept on talking all the tāḷa principles—how it fits—"these are all the preliminaries before you understand the solo." I could feel the classroom adjusting to something so different. And then I said, "Even though there are certain things a drummer plans, there are things which the drummers do not plan", because I believe in spontaneous creations, and how the tradition and creativity go hand in hand in this kind of situation. I tried to explain. Then I talked about the important principles behind the structure, and then all those things: mōrās, kōrvais, naḍai changes, gati ḍhedaś, koraippus, et cetera. And then, "To illustrate all the points I have said, let me play the whole solo. For your convenience sake, let me play in ādi tāḷa." It was a three-hour lecture.

DN: How long was it supposed to be?

SS: Just an hour-and-a-half. Then Jon hugged me and shed tears. That was my first lecture. I don't know for what reasons, but I developed an interest in academic writings; I've also been working on professional books and articles, and I became seriously involved in research writings.

Normally—correct me if I'm wrong—I have seen people in the scholarly field
approaching an analytical study of a performing art through their studies and research, and then correlating that with that of the performing artist, to relate that with actual performance. But here is a case where I thought—I said to myself, "As a performing artist, what I have experienced, let me see how it fits in the academic field. What can I say about the whole tradition, about this performing art the way I look at it, the way I have experienced it."

In that respect I thought it somewhat different from a regular scholarly approach to what I do. Do you agree?

DN: Absolutely. To some extent, that's also my orientation in coming to this. I'm interested in what the people who actually play the music say about it—how it feels to you. At some point today, I would like to go into a little bit of detail—you mentioned your early lessons, you mentioned how your teacher was teaching you, and just now you've spoken about two things that interest me; the notation, and the structure of the solo, so let's take a break and come back to those...

(after break) Let's go into some of the stages of your study that you talked about, into the specific material that you were working on at a given time.

The first place I'd like to start is when you were working with your first teacher. You mentioned

ta di tom nam

the reason I want to go into this is partly to show that everybody does go through the same basic lessons—so you had

ta di tom nam

and then
ta ta di di tom tom nam nam

SS: Yes, all the basic series—then,

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ki} \text{ ta} \\
\text{di} & \quad \text{ki} \text{ ta} \\
\text{tom} & \quad \text{ki} \text{ ta} \\
\text{nam} & \quad \text{ki} \text{ ta}
\end{align*}
\]

then the

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ki} \text{ ta ta ka} \\
\text{di} & \quad \text{ki} \text{ ta ka} \\
\text{tom} & \quad \text{ki} \text{ ta ka} \\
\text{nam} & \quad \text{ki} \text{ ta ka}
\end{align*}
\]

That's how the lessons progressed

DN: Were you taught these exercises within a tālām?

SS: No, not necessarily within ādi tālāa, but there will be a steady beat going, and sometimes—mostly it will be in a four beat tālā.

DN: So that would be caturāśra eka?

SS: Well, sometimes he will keep caturāśra eka, but sometimes he will just keep the beat. Oftentimes in tiśra, three, because obviously it fits into rūpaka tālā;

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ki} \text{ ta ka} \\
\text{di} & \quad \text{ki} \text{ ta ka} \\
\text{tom} & \quad \text{ki} \text{ ta ka} \\
\text{nam} & \quad \text{ki} \text{ ta ka}
\end{align*}
\]
But at that stage, not much of discussion on the structures of tāḷas

DN: But while you were taught these things, you were also expected to recite them.

SS: Yes.

DN: And when you had

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{ta} & - \ k\text{a} \ t\text{a} \ k\text{a} \\
\text{di} & - \ k\text{a} \ t\text{a} \ k\text{a} \\
\text{tom} & - \ k\text{a} \ t\text{a} \ k\text{a} \\
\text{nam} & - \ k\text{a} \ t\text{a} \ k\text{a}
\end{align*} \]

you would practice it in varying speeds, right?

SS: Yes, in three speeds, usually, vilamba, madhyama, and druta.

DN: You were expected to keep some kind of a beat when you recited that, weren't you?

SS: Well, as I recall, he will be saying it in solkaṭṭu but I will be the one playing, and after I finish my playing, then he will ask me to work in solkaṭṭu as well—as a separate practice.

DN: When you worked in solkaṭṭu, you used some sort of hand gestures, right?

SS: Of course. I will be just keeping claps. And at that point—I'm talking about the very, very early stage. At that stage, my cousin did not discuss any tāḷas or anything. Just keeping the beat.

DN: When you have a situation like
was the first kāla like this? (demonstrates slow tempo, one syllable per beat)

SS: I would say so, yes.

DN: And when you doubled that, when you practiced it as solkaṭṭu, were you expected to keep the beat constant?

SS: Constant.

DN: And if you did this (demonstrates counting as three per beat) that was wrong?

SS: Yes. It had to be—(demonstrates two and four per beat)

DN: So that sort of interaction of the pattern and the process was there right from the beginning. You understand what I mean by that?

SS: Yes, I do. Later on, in my teaching, I have incorporated these ideas. Even for the beginners—here I'm talking about the students here in North America, in Canada in the University—there I make a point even to explain the process, how it fits, four over three, four against three, because here people often talk, when they talk about rhythm, about how things interact.

But that's not the way we examine these things. These examinations did not take place. You just keep going with your playing.

DN: I habitually describe the whole solkaṭṭu process, the speaking and the keeping tāḷa with the hands, as a notation of the body. In other words, if you look at Western music notation, you can see that thing.
SS: It's a visual thing.

DN: Right, it's seen, and it can be heard in the mind, but there's no bodily element that goes along with it. It's possible for a person to look at that notation and get it wrong. With the solkaṭṭu method you have a notation that has the check built right into it. There's no such thing as being able to understand it with your mind and not being able to do it. That's a really important strength.

SS: To take you further on that subject—I don't know at that point how much Ranga was implementing solkaṭṭu studies here, but Jon often mentioned that I was one of the early persons to structure a solkaṭṭu course. I did it back in the '70's.

One can study solkaṭṭu without undergoing the trouble of learning mṛdaṅgam; this is more an education in rhythm, because to be able to play on the mṛdaṅgam takes years. But for someone who has the ability and the interest to study solkaṭṭu keeping tālā, it's a very valuable subject.

With that thing in my mind, I introduced a solkaṭṭu course, and even made my students give a performance. Do you remember? We did it here when I came for the Graduate Summer program.

DN: That was the one time I had a personal opportunity to work with you, in the class, and one-on-one. I really enjoyed it thoroughly. Going back to those early lessons, you mentioned the 'tam - ta ta dī na' series. What was that? It sounds like a ṭeka.

SS: It's not a ṭeka. That I considered a departure from the earlier paran type of series.

DN: And by 'paran type of series'—we're not assuming that a person reading this knows what that is.
SS: Okay, what I am saying is—at least from how I have structured my lessons from what I have learned, and there are lots of new things that have been added in my teaching—because I also believe, as a teacher, in constantly rearranging, and also adding new things, and also according to the needs of the student, I may ask him to work on special exercises as well.

To continue on that, say

ta  -  ki  ŭ  ta  ta  ta  ka  ta  ka  ta  ri  ki  ŭ  ta  ta  ka
di  -  ki  ŭ  ta  ki  ŭ  ta  ta  ka  ta  ka  ta  ri  ki  ŭ  ta  ta  ka
tom -  ki  ŭ  ta  ki  ŭ  ta  ta  ka  ta  ka  ta  ri  ki  ŭ  ta  ta  ka
nam -  ki  ŭ  ta  ki  ŭ  ta  ta  ka  ta  ka  ta  ri  ki  ŭ  ta  ta  ka
ta  län  -  gu  ki  ŭ  ta  ta  ka  ta  ka  ta  ri  ki  ŭ  ta  ta  ka
nam -  tom  -  ki  ŭ  ta  ta  ka  ta  ka  ta  ri  ki  ŭ  ta  ta  ka
ta  -  di  -  tan  -  ki  ŭ  ta  ta  ka  ta  ri  ki  ŭ  ta  ta  ka
na  ka  tom  -  tan  -  ki  ŭ  ta  ta  ka  ta  ri  ki  ŭ  ta  ta  ka
na  ka  di  -  tan  -  ki  ŭ  ta  ta  ka  ta  ri  ki  ŭ  ta  ta  ka
na  ka  di  mi  tan  -  ki  ŭ  ta  ta  ka  ta  ri  ki  ŭ  ta  ta  ka

and so on. So this is the series that I am referring to. After this, I am talking about.

tan -  -  ta  -  ta  -  di  -  na  -
tan -  -  ta  -  ta  -  di  -  na  -
ta  -  ta  -  di  -  na  -

I don't know if you people have done that, but anyhow it's something my cousin had taught me, and also Palani.

DN: It's fascinating. Would you give us an example of one of those patterns? Just to speak it?
SS: Yes.

Itam - - - ita - ta - kdi - na -
Itam - - - ita - ta - kdi - na -
ita - ta - kdi - na -
Itam - ki ta ita ka
din - liki ta ta ka
Itam - ki ta
ita - din - liki ta ta ka ita ka ta ri liki ta ta ka

ldi - - - ita - ta - kdi - na -
ldi - - - ita - ta - kdi - na -
ita - ta - kdi - na -
Itam - ki ta ita ka
din - liki ta ta ka
Itam - ki ta
ita - din - liki ta ta ka ita ka ta ri liki ta ta ka

It goes like that.

DN: It is related to the paran section.

SS: In a way. Later, too—but what I am saying is, at this stage, when a student launches on the double-handed strokes, it is like a prelude to the caturaśra paḍam

ta - din - din - na -
ta ta din - din - na -

the two-hand coordinated pattern.

DN: And that's an important feature in the ṭekas that are to come.

SS: Yes. There again, 'ṭeka' is a North Indian term...
DN: Oh, what term do you prefer?

SS: I guess it's a good term to use, but I wish we'd learn to use something else which is typically South Indian. Some people might refer to this as sarvalaghu, because that makes sense—ṭeka also relates to sarvalaghu, but sarvalaghu could also be something slightly different. (laughter) Anyway, this series is a small departure. It's not a whole series, just one or two lessons based on what I recited. But then it's in the tāḷa lesson,

\[ta - \text{din} - \text{din} - \text{na}\]
\[ta \text{ ta } \text{din} - \text{din} - \text{na}\]

where the student first not only learns to use both hands often in the process, but also learns to study the mōrā—how each lesson ends in mōrās.

DN: When you started the āḍī tāḷa lessons, they started with the sarvalaghu pattern

\[ta - \text{din} - \text{din} - \text{na}\]

SS: Yes.

DN: How did they progress from there?

SS: Well, I have also given this in my book, The Art of Drumming: South Indian Mrḍāṅgam, I consider this as Series One. Then in the second Series, I have given—not very many, but just like a development, of how the mīṭu strokes progress. It becomes kind of a filler,

\[ta - \text{di } \text{nu ta - di } \text{nu ta - di } \text{nu ta ka } \text{di } \text{nu}\]

those things.
ta din di nu ta di nu ta din di nu ta di nu

By then you have learned to play four ‘nams’ and ‘dins’ when you struggled very hard in the beginning even to produce one ‘nam’. Now you’re playing a whole series of them. I’m sure you know, it becomes very handy during accompaniment.

The next series is

ta ṇa ta di nu ta di nu

however you—Sri Palani would also say as

ta ṇa ta jo ṇu ta jo ṇu

DN: That’s how it comes down to me...

ta ṇa ta di nu ta di nu

whose solkaṭṭu is that?

SS: I wouldn’t say whose solkaṭṭu, I mean how many people...?

DN: Where did you get it?

SS: Okay, I studied from my cousin as

ta ṇa ta di nu ta di nu

then my master taught me as

ta ṇa ta jo ṇu ta jo ṇu.
I was okay dealing with both. What I'm saying is, even though you break it down, probably what you are looking at from the way you are asking, is how would you break down the tāla compositions? the ādi tāla lessons. Am I correct?

DN: Yeah. What's the structure of it? Because it obviously follows a structure.

SS: It moves from vilamba kāla to madhyama kāla to druta kāla. If you look at the solo, essentially it's based on that—a mṛdaṅgam solo. Not to say that we really stay only in vilamba kāla, and then to madhyama kāla, and we don't mix patterns here and there. I'm not saying that. But the general direction, the general movement of the solo, is from vilamba to madhyama to druta.

DN: So the underlying structure of the solo then is taught right in those lessons.

SS: Yes.

DN: This is something I've observed—that structure is built into the person's mind right from the beginning.

SS: From the beginning. But also, I want to tell you, in how many schools, have how many masters structured their lessons this way. That's another question. I would just like to confine myself to talk about the teachers I have studied with. I'm not going to compare anybody else.

But I have heard from other leading drummers, top-ranked drummers, that in this particular school the structuring is amazing. I have also seen other drummers teaching—to my knowledge, and in my experience, I haven't really come across the solid foundation laid down by these lessons—the way it has been structured, and the whole thought process. The way they are organized: caturaśra paḍam, tiśra paḍam, miśra paḍam, khaṇḍa paḍam. It's wonderful.

Many drummers have expressed this. Probably there is a reason why it is like this. I asked my cousin—I'm sure you are getting there—even before you
ask I want to say this. In my earlier days I couldn’t ask anything, but in later years, there were some conversations when I felt at home speaking to him, “I’m curious to know. Who organized these lessons? Did Sri Palani organize these lessons, or did you study these lessons with Mylathur Sami lyer?” Then he said, “It was Palani Muthiah Pillai who happened to organize some of it.”

The problem with that is—I don’t know if it’s a problem—at least from what I have heard from Ranga, who was one of the few of Palani’s disciples who happened to have studied with Muthiah Pillai as well. He told me that he would ask him to write something one day, and then the next day, “No, no, that’s not the way I wanted” and then he will tear that into pieces—I’m sure you have heard this. (laughs)

DN: Writing?

SS: I don’t know if he asked him to write, or just to remember. But he would say, “No, that’s not the way I gave you.” But I believe this is, in a way, applicable to Sri Palani’s teaching, too. He did not make any drastic departure from what he had taught me. I was holding onto it pretty much the way he had given me, but he was very particular that the lessons should be kept the way they were given.

Probably that answers the question; it would have started from Muthiah Pillai’s time, and then it’s very natural, just like what we do—I’m sure you would have heard many common patterns played by drummers in their mrdangam solos. Then what is it that’s new? What is is that makes one different from the other?

Same way, in the teaching process also, a good master would find ways to implement these lessons, and often he would introduce certain new things here and there. I find that very interesting. Just yesterday, one of my best friends who is working with me, studying to prepare a solo, playing for eḻuppu, said, “I noticed every year you’ve been teaching at York, even
teaching beginners, I find something new with each one. That's really wonderful. What is it that makes you do that?" I said, "I think that also keeps me interested in this job."

Teaching is an art; I consider it a very valuable thing. Unless I have some interest in teaching, and keep going, and also wherever necessary to introduce new things—in other words I don't want to make it stale, and especially nowadays, when I am writing it down on paper—there will always be something fresh, something new.

DN: When you were learning the original ādi tāḷa lessons, at what point did you become aware that there was such a thing as a kōrvai?

SS: In fact, the kōrvai were not taught to me until I had finished the tāḷa lessons, at least two of them. I remember finishing the ādi tāḷa lessons with just the pūṇya mūrā, the long mūrā—not with the kōrvai. So the kōrvai were taught to me at a little later stage, and then, "You know what? After the mūrā, you should play a kōrvai. That's how you end the solo."

DN: You would play only one at the end, just after the big mūrā?

SS: Oh, nothing in between—no, nothing in between. We took them only at the end.

DN: But you were listening to other artists and you heard them playing all these other things—you must have been aware that the structure you were learning and the structure they were playing had some relation with one another.

SS: Well, the way it worked out in my case was that I started very young, and I was exposed to concerts, let alone the kōrvai, many things blew my mind (laughs). So I wasn't too particular about whether a person played a kōrvai or a mūrā. I was simply enthralled by the performance.

My cousin would often take me to concerts, but invariably Palghat Mani Iyer,
or my guru's playing—only such concerts. My cousin wasn't that interested in the theoretical part. He would say, "This is such-and-such, you should try it, you work it out in solkaṭṭu and we will play." But the theorizing—I had very little theory, honestly.

DN: Who introduced you to all that; was it Palani Subramania Pillai?

SS: No, my cousin had talked about the sapta tāḷas, showing me how you can make a chart, and things like that. Other than that, not much of theorizing—what a graha is, and with Sri Palani, no talk on the theory at all.

DN: But on the other hand, the compositions, kōrvaīs and other things he played, are legendary now. So you didn't get most of that type of thing—the kaṇakkku and that sort of stuff, did you get that from Palani?

SS: He would simply play, and I would be asked to play, and I started to figure it out.

DN: On your own?

SS: On my own. I started figuring out.

DN: So he didn't give you puzzles, and say, "This is for miśram, now you show me how to do it for śaṅkīrṇam."

SS: No, not that type of thing, no. He will simply play, and he would expect me to play. He wouldn't even say what the kōrvaī is, or what the length of the phrase is, and so forth. In a way, that really puts you on the spot. If you are curious, or you really want to learn something, you really have to sweat it out—that type of thing. I think it's also part of the process—part of the learning.

DN: It also seems to me that being forced to get it on your own like that, will prevent you from getting the disease a lot of us get, where you see the thing on paper, you memorize it, maybe you learn to recite it, and then
immediately you try to play it. It won’t happen. This way you only absorb what you’re capable of absorbing.

SS: Exactly, and also I think it sinks (in) better this way—it stays in your system. Some of the körvais I would have absorbed part of it in one concert, and then I’d be waiting for completing that until the next concert if my master plays the same körvai. So that’s how we learned these körvais—piece by piece. Then it’s like a hard-earned treasure.

DN: On the same line—something I noticed in learning with Ranga, and I wonder if it’s also common with you, when you did go to the other pađams, like tiśra, miśra, khaṅḍa, was it the case that these were lessons that were set up so that at some point the teacher could say, “Look, there are eight of these; you could also play this in ādi tāḷa, tiśra naḍai.” Did they teach you like that? or is it again something you just figured out?

SS: No, they did not teach like that at all. Perhaps one might notice a certain commonness prevailing among all these compositions—similar types, the kind you have found in ādi tāḷa, applicable to miśra cāpu, in a slightly modified manner. Yet what I’m saying is, there are certain compositions peculiar to that particular tāḷam.

DN: For example?

SS: Unless I have the instrument I cannot play, but that’s very true, at least in the repertoire I have, the lessons I have studied. I find a certain uniqueness about it.

That’s what makes it more interesting, rather than saying, “Oh, it’s just like a transposition. If you play eight ‘ta ka di mi’ for ādi tāḷa, you can play seven ‘ta ka di mi’ it will fit miśra cāpu.” (demonstrates the latter). This is where I often try to explain that the structure of tāḷa is increasingly important in understanding the material and integrating the material.
DN: The structure of the tāla for example in mīra cāpu tāla, that there should be a three and there should be a four, even if you reverse them.

SS: Sure. Otherwise, why do you have a different tāla? And again, seven can take many combinations; not just three and four, but two and five, one and six, and what not. That's the whole purpose of the study. Just recently I gave a lecture on this particular topic—how the tālas become really important in understanding the material that we play.

DN: So did you learn the gati bhedas just by example, just by hearing your master do that, or did he teach you that?

SS: My cousin had already taught a little bit on that, for example tiśram, and other naḍais, but there again, I heard more from my other guru's playing and started working out, and that's how it grew. Lots of things I have worked on, in terms of figuring out and playing, getting some of the ides to work out.

DN: We talked a little bit earlier about what kinds of overlay are possible, and one of the examples that comes to my mind is, as I described to you before, the idea I've heard Ranga play—playing, for example, sixteen strokes in seven beats as if it were ādi tāla and then going to khaṇḍa cāpu lessons, and so on. I'd like to know how you feel about all that stuff. I don't mean to put you on the spot, but it's an interesting question to me.

SS: It is. Well, let me answer it in this way. A person having a very strong sense of laya can accomplish very many things, including the one that you are referring to. I would even say, why not seventeen over twenty!, as long as he has that perfect sense of time.

However, of the several dimensions that the laya takes—at least I look at the laya in this way, there are many dimensions to the whole understanding of rhythm—there are certain ways in which we would feel comfortable doing, and that includes the process of divisibility. So where a particular unit is taken, and made divisible in a logical manner, we tend to follow that.
We are looking for something precise mathematically as well. So what I am saying is, one would ask, “How can you try to do eight in the span of seven?” although I am sure it is possible to prove mathematically as well, using fractions, undoubtedly. To me, music becomes important much more than mathematics. So in terms of the divisibility I was talking about, I think it’s important to make it very clear in the playing how it fits. See what I mean?

DN: I certainly do.

SS: I have given a very roundabout answer to your question...

DN: As a matter of fact, I feel that your answer was extremely precise. It sounds to me as if this may be possible, but number one, the people who can pull it off are few and far between—not everybody who tries it pulls it off—but one hears this, especially among the tavil players, that they go off into layers and layers.

What you’re asking for, is that it should have—the drum has evolved so that it’s one of the most physically satisfying drums to listen to—at the same time, you’re looking for a rational justification for what you play. It unites so much of the person...

SS: Generally speaking, in miśra cāpu tāḷa, one would do tiśra naḍai, (demonstrates) and of course if one has the capacity, because it’s demanding, one can also do the slow tiśra (demonstrates)—you seldom hear that—maybe some masters are playing. But to do other gati bhedas, in some sense becomes unjustifiable.

DN: There are exceptions, are there not? I may be wrong about this, but I think I remember a solo in miśra cāpu tāḷa, hearing

\[ \text{ta} - \text{ka} - \text{di} - \text{mi} - \text{ta ka di mi} \]
where the first four take four beats, and the last four take three
(demonstrates)

SS: Good! I have played that. As I said, certain gatis are applicable, and this is
totally justifiable.

DN: Actually, that's not gati.

SS: Okay, now we are getting into a tricky area of terminology.

DN: What do you call that? Do you call that gati?

SS: Well, I have given a name to that. I call that tiśra caturaśra.

DN: Where the first word applies to the number of beats, and the second word
applies to the phrase you're playing. Have you ever heard the word
aḍaippu?

SS: Yes, aḍaippu is, literally, 'holding'. You hold onto it. In other words you feel
the space, and then play the a phrase, using that space.

DN: Does that apply to the idea we're talking about?

SS: Yes and no. Maybe yes, because one can say the tiśra grouping over
which I am playing four—one can call that tiśra as the aḍaippu, on top of
which you play the caturaśra. I think I can easily explain it in that way.

DN: I remember that as being an extremely powerful solo, because if I
remember correctly, you played a lot of the solo in that form.

SS: Yes. Not only that, I even introduced a khaṇḍa there. What I do in such
cases is to make it as justifiable as possible, and mathematically viable.

DN: So you would put the khaṇḍa within that three also?

SS: Why not? In all this, what I am trying to say is, I want to create a context
within which to work. For example,
{ta - - - din - - - din - - - na - - -}
ta - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
{ta - ka - din - - - din - - - na - - -}
ta - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
{ki ūta ka din - - - din - - - na - - -}
ta - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
{k t t k trom k t t k tr k t t k }¹

It may not be too tight, but the example just came off-hand.

DN: What you just did approaches the idea I was just talking about in its involvement and complexity. Are you aware that there are a lot of people in Madras who believe even that is not viable and shouldn't be done?

SS: I have heard people commenting in this. Yes, I am aware of that.

DN: I found it odd—I've heard people do very beautiful things like this, and to hear others say it shouldn't exist is peculiar to me.

SS: You see, it depends on what one's approach is, and how well it is done—the precision with which it is done. For that matter, the regular tiśra gati could be done in a haphazard way, not really up to the mark, let alone the things we are talking about.

It all depends on how one looks at it. There again, there are certain justifiable things. What I believe from my own experience in playing, and especially in the gati bhedas, is, as I said—there should be some kind of basis for everything. If you know your basis, then you know that what you are doing is right.

DN: So the confirmation comes from within you.

¹Each bracketed group recited over the last three beats of a cycle in miśra cāpu tāḷa He goes on to recite ādi tāḷa lessons over 24-beat groups in miśra cāpu tāḷa
SS: To illustrate a bit further, my master once played a tani (I also played) for a radio recording. He played in miśra jhampa and he was doing his kalpanas in tiśra, melkāla and he launched on an idea, and he gave that kind of a koraippu form. During the process, in the last stage of the koraippu the thing that he played was wonderful—remarkable. I tried to figure it out this way when I came home.

To my astonishment, the last stage of the koraippu, instead of being fifteen, was something like seventeen (laughter). That really puzzled me—that night I did not sleep, and I was waiting for an opportunity to speak with my master.

Next day I caught him in the right moment. He was chewing his tobacco, after a nice meal, and I was just standing there. He looked at me and saw the puzzlement on my face, and said, “Sankaran, what is that? You seem to have something on your mind.” I said, “Kindly pardon me, I should not even be asking this, but I noticed something, and I wanted to mention this.” He said, “No, go ahead—don’t be afraid.”

So with lots of courage I said, “I was trying to follow what you were playing yesterday, and the last phase of the koraippu you were trying to do, I did it in solkaṭṭu, but it didn’t seem to fit. Maybe I was wrong, I didn’t keep the tāla right or something. Would you care to say anything about this?”

Then I was in deep trouble: “Okay, go get the mṛdaṅgam.” (laughter) “Play it.” I tried to remember the way he played, then I said “This is how I thought you played the last one. Please correct me if I was wrong.” Do you know what he said? “You are absolutely right—but I had my reasons for playing seventeen, and this is my reason—the aesthetics.” That blew my mind.

DN: That he would do something mathematically irrational for an aesthetic reason and talk about it?
SS: Yes, mathematically irrational in the sense, but it did not appear irrational at all the way he played!

DN: Not aesthetically irrational, but it is possible for mathematical rationality and aesthetic rationality to diverge.

SS: To diverge. And that is why in my experience, after years, when I am writing, when I describe the different stages in learning, I have said that the last stage of the art defies analysis. I'm sorry, you are doing analysis, but I have to say this.

Because when I go to the concert stage, I don't go with the analytical mind—I want to play music. Then we start working it out, and sometimes it will turn out that certain mathematically irrational elements have been adapted. But when it is aesthetically satisfying, how do you account? But my view is, it is not that easy to bridge the two—not many people can do. Perhaps if somebody else played, he would have made it very obvious.

DN: Another example of that kind of approach was the drummer who used to play for Balamma, Kuppuswamy. A lot of the things he played, who can figure that out? But the aesthetic value of it is so obvious that nobody questions it.

SS: These things are very interesting. That was the only time I ever heard my master comment on such things. That too, very precisely—he said it was for aesthetics.

It's a very involved subject. One must also remember that the masters also change, over a period of time, in their playing methods. I'm sure that the time I heard Sri Palani Subramania Pillai was not the same as Ranga heard. Every artist matures, acquires enormous experience. I'm sure the way I play today may not be the same as the way I played twenty years ago—I think it's true of many artists.
DN: Of course—leave alone the differences in individual students, when they worked with a particular master is also going to affect how they sound. I know, to some extent, Mr. Kandaswamy, and you, and Ranga. These are all very different approaches to the instrument and to the music, and all directly from the same master.

SS: It's pertinent at this point to tell how my master has advised me: "You follow my path, but be individual. You will find a way to be individual." I think that's what I am today.

DN: Can we talk about one aspect of that individuality? There have been, as far as I know, only three attempts to work out a notation for mrdanga strokes. The first was Bob Brown, and I include what Ranga and his students later worked out as having originated with that; another is T. Harihar Sharma, who has tried to make the solkattu literal with the strokes—his students will recite a pattern one way for solkattu, and another to indicate the strokes. For example,

\[
\text{ta ka ta ri ki ta ta ka}
\]

becomes

\[
\text{ta ta cha ta ki ta ta ka}
\]

The only other person I know of is you, and you have developed your own independent notation system. Can you tell me how that originated?

SS: Again, a surprising coincidence. I was often teaching in India, but often busy with concerts—I don't know what made me look at my own writing—One day I was noting down some new ideas, and when I tried to play, I played it one way. After a week I played it slightly different. I thought, "What is this? I have the same composition, I'm playing myself slightly different. Wouldn't it be nice to have some kind of notation to write this the way it should sound?"
DN: Right from the beginning, when you said, "I was writing down a composition", that struck me as odd right there. Why were you writing it down?

SS: I didn't at the beginning, but what happens at a later stage, is that in order not to forget certain things, I started jotting down, in point form, here and there.

DN: You'd find some nice thing, and you didn't want to forget it.

SS: I didn't want to forget—in some form—sometimes it was even hard to read my own writing. Then a stage came when I thought some of the things I really wanted to write it down seriously, for my own reference. Not during my learning stages, mind you, although my cousin used to encourage me a little bit (to write things down) so that I don't forget.

Then what happened was I had my own curiosity about having some kind of a system for writing the way it ought to be played. Then I went through several stages—I followed several methods, and finally arrived at this one—something like a graph (shows his book). It looks a little like Chinese characters.

My notations are based on the directional movement of the hand, the way I sit with my drum and play. Many of them have been conceived in that way. There again, for strokes like 'nam' and 'din', I had different symbols—these are all very symbolic. Then it came to me that technically, they are the same, the way it's played; it's just that you strike at a different point on the valandalai—but you use the same fingering, holding with your ring finger and striking with your index finger.

I finally ended up using 'N' for 'nam' and 'n' for 'din'. Those are the only two letters, just to make it simple. All others are totally graphic.

DN: I understand it, it's a very effective notation.
SS: At one point I was asked to go through Professor Sharma's book, and make my comments, and I am sorry to say that phrases like

\( \text{ta ta cha ta ki ta ta ka} \)

are totally unaesthetic, but I'm sure it serves certain purposes. At the same time, I believe in preserving the solkaṭṭu as well as the strokes. That's the most important and crucial thing here.

Just before coming to Canada, I had launched on this idea of notating. I hadn't even seen Bob Brown's book until 1973. So when I first came and started teaching, I thought it was time to experiment with this. So I would start with

\( \text{ta di tom nam} \)

and then when it came to

\( \text{ta - ki ta} \)

I would say before the student asked, "You might wonder why this was 'di', and now it's 'ki'."

Then I started researching, examining—okay, solkaṭṭu has its own beauty, aesthetics, and fluency—the combination. And there are subtle differences; my master Palani would say

\( \text{di ku ta ka ta ri gi du} \)

He would never say

\( \text{ta ka ta ri ki ta ta ka} \)
This is more from the Tanjore style (demonstrates some different solkaṭṭu styles). Sometimes I also noticed that they made certain solkaṭṭus difficult for themselves to pronounce, because they liked the way they sounded. Playing also, I still remember, my master would play

ki ṭa ta ka ta ta din gi ṇa tom ta

and he would get really upset if you changed it. So I thought, the notation can preserve this. This way the fingering can be preserved.

We don’t know how Dakshinamurthy Pillai played, we don’t know how Muthiah Pillai played—at least I have heard Sri Palani, and you can trust me as to how he gave these lessons. There are recordings, but they’re scarce.

DN: They’re scarce, and you can’t be one hundred percent certain. I’m hoping that doing transcriptions from videotape will help that situation.

SS: It should. I also had a historical perspective on the whole situation. We talk so much about the gurukula system of learning without really writing, but I’m sure on the other hand that historically there must have been some kind of writing—I’m not just talking about drumming, but the gamakas, and so forth, people must have thought of it. So it’s time now that we drummers do it.

DN: Do you think the tradition of playing an improvised percussion solo is an old one?

SS: I would say so. In what form, we do not know. But to have Sangītaratnākara and Silappadikaram mention such a well-developed art, gives every indication that this art really flourished at that point in history. If they had not at least explored some of the possibilities, it would not have appeared in the literature.
DN: It may have sounded more like the Kerala drumming traditions. I recorded some chenda and maddalam playing at Puram, and that's a completely different thing.

SS: Different, but it's related. That's my latest research interest, the relation between the Kerala tradition and the Karnataka tradition. Indeed, that's a topic I'm working on my own.

DN: I'm going to propose that we close for today, and that all the questions that are still on my mind be addressed at the second interview, which will take place soon. I'm overwhelmed and grateful to you.

SS: It's my great pleasure. I'm always happy to communicate my ideas, and especially in a situation like this. This topic cannot be spoken about to an ordinary man, who doesn't have any knowledge of this art. As long as it's useful for your work, I am happy.
VELLORE G. RAMABHADRAN
SECOND INTERVIEW: FEBRUARY 29, 1988

DN: We're here with Mr. Ramabhadrnan, and we're going to talk about the tani āvartanam you played at Bishop's Garden. I've written down some of the things that happened in that solo, and if you don't mind, we can start by talking about a couple of those...

You started off in the traditional way of taking phrases like

\[ \text{ita} \quad \text{din} \quad \text{kdin} \quad \text{na} \quad \]
\[ \text{ita ka} \quad \text{din} \quad \text{kdin} \quad \text{na} \quad \]

VR: But a little change. That is the traditional way;

\[ \text{ita} \quad \text{din} \quad \text{kdin} \quad \text{na} \quad \]
\[ \text{ita ta} \quad \text{din} \quad \text{kdin} \quad \text{na} \quad \]
\[ \text{ita} \quad \text{din} \quad \text{kdin} \quad \text{na} \quad \]
\[ \text{I} \quad \text{din} \quad \text{kdin} \quad \text{na} \quad \]

Some schools have variations:

\[ \text{itam} \quad - \quad - \quad I \quad \text{ta ka} \quad \]
\[ \text{ita ka} \quad \text{din} \quad \text{kdin} \quad \text{ta ka} \quad \]
\[ \text{kdin ta ka} \quad \text{din ita ka} \quad \text{jo nu I} \quad \]
\[ \text{din} \quad \text{ta itam} \quad - \quad - \quad \]

This displays Palani's style.

DN: That's the first idea that comes out, that
After you played it just like that about three times,¹ you changed it so that rather than being four beats long, it became three and a half; you did it twice like that, and then this reduction, this

Why did you switch to miśra before that?

VR: That is varieties; otherwise it gets boring.

DN: My question is, when you started to take it as miśra, did you know at that point what you were going to do next?

VR: Yes.

DN: When did you know?

VR: From that

¹00:48
It is my individual kalpana svaras.

DN: So in order to start at the right place to play that, you have to leave seven beats...

VR: Yeah, seven beats.

DN: So you just divide it three-and-a-half, three-and-a-half.

VR: I will also play miśram (gati) separately;

\[ \text{ta - din - ta ki ta} \]
\[ \text{ta ka jo nu ta ki ta} \]
\[ \text{ta ka din - din - ta ka di mi ta ki ta} \]

Like this other varieties; miśram, tiśram,...

DN: Right. Those are all the naḍais, but this is what you'd call miśra jāti, right?

VR: Yes, miśra jāti.

DN: Okay. So you knew when you started that

\[ \text{tam - - di ta ka din - din - din - na} \]
idea that you wanted to end with this particular mōrā.

VR: No, mōrā means only this

\[ \text{di} - \tan \ k \ t \ t \ r \ k \ t \ t \ k \]

This is a kōrvai.

DN: It's a kōrvai? But if I play

\begin{align*}
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ka} & \quad \text{di} & \quad \text{na} & \quad \text{tam} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ka} & \quad \text{di} & \quad \text{na} & \quad \text{tam} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ka} & \quad \text{di} & \quad \text{na}
\end{align*}

then what do you call that? Is that an arudi?

VR: Yes, that is a small arudi.

DN: So the different schools use the words a little differently...

VR: This is called 'half-āvarta arudi'. Then,

\begin{align*}
\text{lt}a & \quad \text{ta} & \quad \text{ka} & \quad \text{di} & \quad \text{in} & \quad \text{lt}a & \quad \text{ka} & \quad \text{jo} & \quad \text{nu} \\
\text{lt}a & \quad \text{ta} & \quad \text{ka} & \quad \text{di} & \quad \text{in} & \quad \text{lt}a & \quad \text{ka} & \quad \text{jo} & \quad \text{nu} \\
\text{lt}a & \quad \text{ta} & \quad \text{ka} & \quad \text{di} & \quad \text{in} & \quad \text{lt}a & \quad \text{ka} & \quad \text{jo} & \quad \text{nu}
\end{align*}

This is 'full-āvarta arudi'. One whole cycle.

DN: What about this? (00:55)

---

\[2\text{The ending, or long mōrā}\]
Is that an arudi?

VR: Not arudi. That is some improvisation within the meter—arudi is for the end.

DN: Three times, and finished. Then what do you call this?

VR: No name. This is just imagination.

DN: That’s fine. That’s what I wanted to find out about. Then you come to this—you referred to it a minute ago as a körvai. It starts (1:51)

ta tom - ta - tom -
ta tom - ta - tom -
ta tom ta - - - - -
ta ta ka di na tom - -
ta ta ka di na tom - -
ta ta ka di na tom - -
ta - - tom - ta di ki ta tom

VR: That is the körvai
ta - l- tom - ta kdi ki ta tom
lt - - tom l- ta di ki lta tom
ta - l- tom - ta kdi ki ta tom

That is körvai; three times.

DN: That part is the körvai. Then what about the things leading up to it?

    ta tom - ta - tom -
    ta tom - ta - tom -
    ta tom

                ta - - - - -

VR: Yes, I will tell you. These are all small körvais—varieties, concluding like this.

DN: After that, you did something very interesting; you played just one or two beats in khanḍa gati (2:47). What I wondered about is whether, when you do that, play just one or two beats, are you thinking maybe you’re going to play something in khanḍa gati if it feels right?

VR: Maybe continue. It’s our wish. It’s about the atmosphere, and whether it feels good, and how the main artist puts the tālam—that’s the main thing in our music; if they don’t put the tālam properly, the whole tani āvartanam is a waste. Some musicians have a weakness in putting the tālam. They’ll sing
according to their own sense (of it), but when they put it for the tani avartanam, the percussionists suffer.

DN: It's almost a weakness in this particular musical form that you have to depend on somebody else to do that.

VR: Yes. If you play very easy things, they can put it, but if not—you have to gauge it—'Oh, he's not fit for this.' So you play simply sarvalaghu naḍai.

DN: So that's a big factor in determining what you're going to play for your solo.

VR: Determine—you know that we don't prepare (our solos) in Indian music. But körvais we prepare. Without preparation we won't play körvais. In between, all this kalpana solkaṭṭu. Kalpana means,

\[
\begin{align*}
&t\quad d\quad i\quad n\quad t\quad a\quad d\quad n\quad t \\
&t\quad t\quad k\quad i\quad t\quad a \\
&t\quad t\quad k\quad i\quad t\quad a \\
&k\quad d\quad i\quad t\quad a \\
&t\quad k\quad d\quad i\quad m\quad t\quad k\quad t\quad a \\
&t\quad k\quad j\quad ñ\quad t\quad k\quad t\quad a \\
&t\quad k\quad d\quad i\quad m\quad t\quad k\quad t\quad a \\
&t\quad k\quad j\quad ñ\quad t\quad k\quad t\quad a \\
&\quad t\quad a \\
\end{align*}
\]

this is miṣram. You can have

\[
\begin{align*}
&t\quad t\quad t\quad t\quad t\quad t\quad t \\
&k\quad d\quad i \\
&t\quad m \quad t \\
&t\quad d\quad i \\
&t\quad ñ\quad ñ\quad t\quad o \\
\end{align*}
\]

like this;
DN: And then when you feel it's the right time, you bring in a körvai, but you don't know ahead of time which one you're going to play.

VR: We know so many körvais. Long körvais, small and easy körvais—it will suit the atmosphere—whether the audience will enjoy—different schools have different types. You know the Karaikudi Mani school—all the körvais come as 'ta tom'. But the 'ta tom' körväi was invented by Palani Subramania Pillai. You see,

Ita - ta - ta - ta
Idi - di - di - di
Itom - tom - tom - tom
Ita ka di mi ta ki ta

Ita - tom -
ta - tom -
ta - - tom - -

ta - tom -
Ita - tom -
Ita - - tom - -

ta - tom -
ta - - tom - -
ta - - Itom - -

ta - - - - Itom - - - -
ta - - - tom - - - -
ta - - - [tom]

for this
they are using silence. It's very beautiful. This is Palani's school.
Dakshinamurthy Pillai used to play like this. His guru was Mamundia Pillai.
Muthiah Pillai\(^3\) also learned from him. The Palani school solkaṭṭu has some
tavil influence. The Mani Iyer school borrows from this Malayalam
chenda. The real mṛdaṅgam solkaṭṭu is different; you take Tanjore Ramdas
Rao, only gumiki, mīṭu, this araicāpu.

DN: The next thing that happened after that khaṇḍa kōrvai is that you very
nicely slipped into miśra gati (3:11) The general motif is five plus nine

\(\text{k}\text{din} - \text{ta}\text{ din} - \text{ki}\text{ ta }\text{ta}\text{ ki }\text{ta}\text{ ta}\text{ ka }\text{jo }\text{nu}\)

then you go on to play a kōrvai (3:39)

VR: Yes. That was invented by Mani Iyer

---

\(^3\) Palani Subramania Pillai's father/teacher
ta - ta - di -
ta ka - din - ta -
ta - - ta di ki ta tom ta di ki ta tom

like this three times.

DN: So this comes from Mani Iyer...

VR: He would always add some small twist. Raghu also plays this particular körvai.

DN: The one I know goes like this:
ta - ta - di -
ta ka - tom - ta -
tom - ta tom -
ta - ldi - ta di ki ta tom

vr: the same thing. only difference is the solkaṭṭu.

dn: after you finish this miśra gati idea, you play a very interesting körvai in three different speeds; one caturaśram (5:21) and two of tiśram (5:32, 5:46)

vr: yes. this körvai was by my father. it is from the time of nayana pillai and the 'full bench'. they used to play this körvai:
ltā - hu ṭa ljem -
ta ki ltā jem -
ta kdi ta ki ṭa ltā ki ṭa jem -
ta di ta liki ṭa ta ka
ljem -
ta di liki ṭa ta ki
ltā - -
ta kdi ki ṭa tom l- t d k ṭ tom
ta kdi ki ṭa tom l- t d k ṭ tom
ta kdi ki ṭa tom l- t d k ṭ tom

slow tiśram
ltā - hu ltā jem -
ltā ki ṭa ljem -
ta kdi ta ki ltā ta ki ltā jem -
ltā di ta liki ṭa ta lika
jem -
ltā di ki ltā ta ki
ltā - -
ltā di ki ltā tom - lt d k ṭ tom
tlta - -
lta di ki ltā tom - lt d k ṭ tom
tlta - -
lta di ki ltā tom - lt d k ṭ tom
fast tiṣram
ła - hu ła jem -
ła ki ła jem -
ta l'kta ła ta ki lta jem -
ta di ta l'kta ta ka jem -
ła di ki ła ta ki lta -

ła di ki l'kta tom - t d k tabla -
ła di ki l'kta tom - t d k tabla -
ła di ki l'kta tom - t d k tabla -

like this once caturaśram, then slow tiṣram, then fast tiṣram. This is for variety. If you want, you can do three times in caturaśram, but it's not interesting.

DN: This way you can shift into tiśra gati, but this is a śaṅkīna jāti korvai, right?

VR: Yes, nine beats.

DN: Here in the middle section,

ta l'kta ła ta ki lta jem l-
ta di ta l'kta ta ka ljem -
ta di l'kta ta ta ki
the lines go eight, seven, six. You could also do three sevens there, right?

VR: Yes. This is called gopucca yati. The cow's tail; big, then small. Like this:

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{ita} & - \text{di} & \text{ita} \text{ ri} & \text{ta} & \text{jo} & \text{nu} & \text{ta} \\
\text{di} & - \text{ita} & \text{ri} & \text{ta} & \text{jo} & \text{nu} & \text{ta} \\
& \text{ta} & \text{ri} & \text{ta} & \text{jo} & \text{nu} & \text{ta} \\
& \text{tri} & \text{ta} & \text{jo} & \text{nu} & \text{ita} \\
& \text{ta} & \text{jo} & \text{nu} & \text{ita} \\
& & \text{jo} & \text{nu} & \text{ta} \\
& & \text{ltam} & - & - \\
\text{ta} & \text{ldi} & \text{ki} & \text{ta} & \text{tom} & \text{l} - & \text{d k t} & \text{tom} & \text{ltam} & - & - \\
\text{ta} & \text{ldi} & \text{ki} & \text{ta} & \text{tom} & \text{l} - & \text{d k t} & \text{tom} & \text{ltam} & - & - \\
\text{ta} & \text{ldi} & \text{ki} & \text{ta} & \text{tom} & \text{l} - & \text{d k t} & \text{tom} & \text{ltam} & - & - \\
\end{align*} \]

this one is the same.4 Vocalists will also sing like this;

Tyagaraja yogavaibhavam
agarajayogavaibhavam
raja yogavaibhavam
yogavaibhavam

DN: This idea of playing first in caturaśra, then in slow tiśra, and in fast tiśra, really, you can do that with any kōrvai, right? (and come out with the same number of beats as if doing the original speed three times). It's just that the third one starts in the middle of a beat somewhere.

4That is, it's also seventy-two pulses, and has the same mōrā
VR: So many possibilities, but very difficult to do with the main artist’s tālam. But it’s a very interesting kōrvaī. Ranga used to do so many like this, that he got from Palani.

DN: What do you do if you make a mistake?

VR: I don’t ever make a mistake, because I play only very easy kōrvaīs. Because from the audience’s point of view it’s very bad. They’ll notice “Oh, he has not done it correctly, he’s going round and round.” What’s the use? So I avoid it.

DN: Again, that takes me back to—the structure of your solo is very beautiful, and you’re able to maintain it partly because you don’t try difficult and dangerous things, and so the kōrvaīs flow naturally out of the āūkas, and you use gumīki almost all the time.

VR: Right. I don’t really beat it until the end, in the parānās. There you should beat it. The rest of the time I will use gumīki.

DN: I actually went through and counted it. The whole solo is seventy-seven āvartas, and you play seventy of them with gumīki.

VR: I always prefer gumikis.

DN: Well, listening to you play them, I prefer them, too. You even use them in the kōrvaīs, which is a beautiful effect.

VR: If there’s a microphone, it comes out really perfectly. If you beat it, the clarity is not there. For a mic-less concert, beating is good.

DN: My feeling about the mṛdaṅgam itself, is that sometimes the toppī is very good, sometimes not so good. If it’s not so good, are you able to make it sound good?

VR: Yes. We check it at home, put the māvu and play. If it needs some adjusting, we do that. In the summer, the climate makes all the śrūtīs go down. If the
töppr ripples, it has to be rebuilt. You have to check it thoroughly. Otherwise the instrument will be difficult.

DN: What do you do if the drum is just terrible?

VR: If the hall is air-conditioned, I take it there one hour ahead of time. You have to take some pains to allow the instrument to adjust to that atmosphere. Then it will be good. They are all small things, but you must work. If the audience says mṛdaṅgam is not good, it's our fault.

The climate in Western countries suits the mṛdaṅgam very well. If I'm going to America I only take one mṛdaṅgam.

DN: One mṛdaṅgam?

VR: Yes, for sixty concerts.

DN: And the sadam didn't come off?

VR: With my playing, the sadam won't come off. Karaikudi Mani takes it off, and T.K. Murthy, but I don't.

DN: How many concerts will you play with one sadam?

VR: I will play ten concerts or so. Now all the concerts are miked. It's not necessary to beat. If you beat, the nādam will go down. If you cry, the music will cry—shout. That is what Tyagajaswamy meant: "Sogasugaṁṛdaṅgatālamu". The sound should be beautiful. In another song he wrote, "What's the use of beating the mṛdaṅgam?"

DN: I wonder what the mṛdaṅgam players were doing in his day. We just don't know.

VR: Those days not developed. A concert would draw two or three thousand people, and there was no mic, so they were just beating.
DN: Well, we’re still in the tiśra gati section of your tani, and there’s a körvai you ended with...(7:42)

VR: It’s simple:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ta ka kādīn} & \quad \text{di} & \quad \text{na} & \quad \text{ta} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ta ka kādīn} & \quad \text{di} & \quad \text{na} & \quad \text{ta} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ta ka kādīn} & \quad \text{di} & \quad \text{na} & \quad \text{ta} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ka dī} & \quad \text{du} & \quad \text{ta di} & \quad \text{ki tā tom} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{ka kī} & \quad \text{kū} & \quad \text{ta di} & \quad \text{ki tā tom} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{līkā} & \quad \text{di} & \quad \text{kū} & \quad \text{ta di} & \quad \text{ki tā tom}
\end{align*}
\]

DN: And after that, these beautiful parans, and then the mōrā, and then this big körvai which you have composed...

VR: See, I made it like the first lessons

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta} & \quad \quad \quad \text{ta} \\
\text{di} & \quad \quad \quad \text{di} \\
\text{tom} & \quad \quad \quad \text{tom} \\
\text{nam} & \quad \quad \quad \text{nam} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \quad \quad \text{ta} \\
\text{di} & \quad \quad \quad \text{di} \\
\text{tom} & \quad \quad \quad \text{tom} \\
\text{nam} & \quad \quad \quad \text{nam} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \quad \quad \text{ta} \\
\text{di} & \quad \quad \quad \text{di} \\
\text{tom tom} & \\
\text{nam nam}
\end{align*}
\]

I composed like this:
ita - ta -

di - di -

tom - itom -

nam - nam -

ita - ta -

kdi - di -

itom - tom -

nam - nam -

ita ta -

di kdi -

itom tom -

nam nam -

ta ta

di di

tom tom -

nam nam

- ta - - tom - ta kdi ki ta tom

ita - -

ta ilka

ta - - itom - ta di lki ta tom

ta ka kdi ku

ta - - tom - ta kdi ki ta tom

but for this occasion, I played
DN: And again, as soon as you're finished and the song starts, immediately back to gumiki. What makes this particular solo so beautiful to me is the way the gumiki flows through it; it just never stops. And in the fast, double-speed
ţekas, the control and the sound are marvelous. I don't think you could teach that; it's your gift.

VR: One day I will tell you how to play like this; you come to my house, and I'll teach you that particular pattern.
DN: We're having the second interview today with Dr. T.K. Murthy. We'll listen to parts of the solo from December 13, and we'll stop when we come to things about which I want to ask him. I've written some things down, the mōrās and all; you'll have to tell me whether I've done it correctly. (starts tape, stops at 1:17)

I want to stop there for a minute. Is that a 'ta din gi ṇa tom'?

TKM: You have to call that a kōrvai.

DN: What's the difference?

TKM: Kōrvai means it has something joined to something else.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta} & - - \text{di} - - \text{ta ka di na} - \text{ta} - - \\
& \quad \text{ta k} \, \text{ṭ} \, \text{ṭ} \, \text{k tom k} \, \text{ṭ} \, \text{ṭ} \, \text{tom} - -
\end{align*}
\]

that

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta} & \, \text{k} \, \text{ṭ} \, \text{ṭ} \, \text{k tom k} \, \text{ṭ} \, \text{ṭ} \, \text{tom} - -
\end{align*}
\]

is a kanjira pattern. Then

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{di} & - - \text{ta ka di na} - \text{ta} - - \\
& \quad \text{ta k} \, \text{ṭ} \, \text{ṭ} \, \text{k tom k} \, \text{ṭ} \, \text{ṭ} \, \text{tom} - -
\end{align*}
\]

Sometimes it is called 'ta din gi ṇa tom' and sometimes kōrvai.

DN: I want to check if I have this right. It goes
ta - - di - - ta ka di na - ta - -

That 'ta' in the end is four, right?

TKM: Right; first

    ta - - di - -

three and three kārvai, then that

    ta - - -

is four.

    lta - - di l - ta ka ldi na - ta l - -
       ta lk ŭ t k tom k ŭ l tom - -
       di l - ta ka ldi na - ta l - -
       ta lk ŭ t k tom k ŭ l tom - -
       ta lka di na - lta - -

       lta k ŭ t k tom lk ŭ l tom - -
       lta k ŭ t k tom lk ŭ l tom - -
       lta k ŭ t k tom lk ŭ l tom
          ta - l - -
       ta lk ŭ t k tom k ŭ l tom - -
       ta lk ŭ t k tom k ŭ l tom - -
       ta lk ŭ t k tom k ŭ l tom
          ta - - l - -
       ta k ŭ lt k tom k ŭ l tom l - -
       ta k ŭ lt k tom k ŭ l tom l - -
       ta k ŭ lt k tom k ŭ l tom (128)

there in between (the 'x' figures) it's five kārvai.
DN: That's what I had there. You didn't play it three times.

TKM: It comes sama to sama. You can play it once or three times, but you mustn't play it twice.

DN: That's my question exactly.

TKM: It's fine to play it just once when it's sama to sama.

DN: Altogether it's sixteen akṣaras.

TKM: Well, it's thirty-two, but since each beat has two, yes, it's sixteen.

DN: In our style, we'd say the whole thing comes to 128. Is that how you would talk about it?

TKM: I would talk in terms of the akṣaras, but it depends on what you're doing. If you want the little details, it's the mātras. If you're looking at the bigger structure it's akṣaras.

DN: Great. And whose körvai is this?

TKM: It's my own. It comes from another one with the same āṣu. I changed it to make it sama to sama. I added that kanjira pattern to improve it.

DN: How long ago did you compose this?

TKM: I'd say about fifteen years ago.

DN: What was the occasion? Was it a lesson? or a concert?

TKM: No, I got it sitting alone at home. If I'm talking with anyone these things don't come. When I'm sitting alone I get lots of körvais, or lying in bed at night—the train is also very good. I get lots of ideas sitting alone on the train. This makes me happier than anything else.

DN: (stops tape at 2:38) Whose körvai is this?
TKM: This is Mamundia Pillai's. It is for kanjira. He was Dakshinamurthy Pillai's
guru. This is his 'ta din gi ṇa tom'. This starts in tişram, then goes into
caturaşram, then again tişram, and back to caturaşram.

tişram
    ṇa - ka - din - ṇa - ta - - - l - -
ta -
ta - ṇka - din - ta - ṇa - - - -
    ṇa -
ta - ka - ḍin - ta - ta - l - - -

    ta - l - - - - -
    ḍi - - - - - - l - -
    ki - - - - - l - -
    ṇa - l - - - - -
    tom - - - - - - l - -

    ta - - - l - - - -
    ḍi - l - - - - -
    ḍi - - - - - - l - -
    ṇa - - - l - - - -
    tom - l - - - - -

    ṇa - - - - - l - -
    ḍi - - - l - - - -
    ki - l - - - - -
    ṇa - - - - - l - -

    caturaşram
    tom - - - l - - -
ta - l- -
di - - -
lki - - -
ta - l- -
tom - - -

lta - - -
di - l- -
ki - - -
lta - - -
tom - l- -

ta - - -
ldi - - -
ki - l- -
ta - - -
caturaśram
ltom - -

ta l- di - ki l- ta - tom l-
ta - ldi - ki - ta l- tom -
ta l- di - ki l- ta - tom l-

\[\text{t k d k t r l k t} \text{ tom}\]
\[\text{t k d k t r k t} \text{ tom}\]
\[\text{t k l d k t r k t} \text{ tom}\]

In the beginning, that slow tīṣram and then caturaśram, you have to keep it inside, that ‘ta ki ta ki ta ta ki ta ta ki ta’ or ‘ta ka di mi’.

DN: That’s really difficult. Who will keep tāḷam for that?
TKM: For somebody who can't keep tālam for that, I have another one. It starts in tišram, then goes to khanḍam. Again tišram, and then ends beat to beat in khanḍam. I will recite that.
tiśra
Ita - di - ki - ṭa - toṃ -
ta - kī - ki - ṭa - toṃ -
ta - di - lki - ṭa - toṃ -
khāṇḍa
Ita di ki ṭa toṃ
Ita di ki ṭa toṃ
Ita di ki ṭa toṃ

If they are up to our level, we can play this. If not, we have to leave it.

DN: Is that also Mamundia Pillai's?

TKM: No, this is mine. I made it in the same style.

DN: This kōrvai that you played, who taught it to you, your teacher?

TKM: No, Palghat Mani played it. He heard Mamundia Pillai play it. Palghat Mani and Dakshinamurthy Pillai used to play many concerts together. Mamundia Pillai had a student, Trichendur Ramaiyah Pillai, who played—I played a concert with him, and I heard him play this kōrvai. It was in Trichendur, in the temple, with Flute Mahalingam and Papa Venkatramaiah. I heard it and understood it, and after the concert I went and asked him: "That kōrvai you played, whose is it?" "It's my guru's." Then he recited it to me and confirmed that I had understood. After that I used to play it.

DN: It's interesting. Let's go on. (stops at 4:08)

TKM: This one—one day my teacher was sitting with a tavīl player named Minakshisundaram Pillai, a great vidvān. My teacher pointed to me and said, "Ask him something." I was supposed to answer. He said to me, "Say one 'ta din gi ṭa toṃ'." I didn't know what he meant, so I looked at my teacher, and he wouldn't say anything, so I said,
ta di ki ṭa tom [ṭa]

“Okay, now two times.” So,

ta di ki ṭa tom
ta di ki ṭa tom [ṭa]

“Now make one in the place of the two.” So,

ta - di - ki - ṭa - tom - [ṭa]

Now three (one pulse after beat 5):

(ta )
ta di ki ṭa tom
ta di ki ṭa tom
ta di ki ṭa tom [ṭa]

that becomes

(ta )
ta - - di - - ki - - ṭa - - tom - - [ṭa]

then, within that fifteen, one caturaśram, then slow tiśram, then fast tiśram. Then he asked me for tiśram from the fourth beat. (of ādi tālam; 20 pulses)

(ta ka )
ta - - di - - - - ki - - ṭa - - tom - -

that space for ‘di’ is big Then miśram (3 pulses after the third beat)
(ta ki wał )
ta - - - - - di - - - - - ki - - ța - - tom - -

Then I made a mistake, because I was just a little boy, and his questions were making me nervous. My guru made as if to hit me, but that man said, “He's done so much already—keep still.” So he explained it to me, and then told me to compose a kōrvāi like this. It took me about half an hour, but then I said, Okay;

itä di ki ța tom

tä di ki ța tom

ta - - - - di - - - lki - - - l-ța - - l- tom - l- - -

ta l- - - di - - - ki l- - - ța l- - - tom l- - -
"No, not like that; don't break up the reduction." Here's what he meant; I'll do tišram
I (ta ki ta)
ta l - - - l- din - - l - - - l - - l- ki - - l-
ta l - - - l- tom - - l-

ta l - - - l- din - - l - - - l - - - l- ki - - l-
ta l - - - l- tom - - l-

ta l - - l- din - - l - - - l - - - l- ki - - l-
ta l - - l- tom - - l-

ta l- din - - l- ki - l- ta - - l- tom - -

ta l- din - - l- ki - ta l- tom -

ta l din - l- ki - ta l- tom

ta l din - l- ki - ta l- tom

ta l din - l- ki - ta l- tom

ta l din - l- ki - ta l- tom

ta l din - l- ki - ta l- tom

ta l din - l- ki - ta l- tom

ta l din - l- ki - ta l- tom

ta l din - l- ki - ta l- tom

ta l din - l- ki - ta l- tom

ta l din - l- ki - ta l- tom

ta l din - l- ki - ta l- tom

ta l din - l- ki - ta l- tom

ta l din - l- ki - ta l- tom

ta l din - l- ki - ta l- tom

ta l din - l- ki - ta l- tom

ta l din - l- ki - ta l- tom

ta l din - l- ki - ta l- tom

ta l din - l- ki - ta l- tom

ta l din - l- ki - ta l- tom

ta l din - l- ki - ta l- tom

then he said, “Correct.” This one I played (3:40) is from Pakkiria Pillai (1869-1922). It starts with miśra kārvai:
Ita - - - l - - -
di - - - l - - -
ki - - - l - - -
ta - - l - - -
tom - - - l - - -

ta - - - l - - -
di - - - l - - -
ki - - - l - - -
ta - - l - - -
tom - - - l - - -

ta - - l - di - l - - ki l - - - lta - - - l tom - - l - - -

ta - - di - i - - ki - l - - ta - - l - tom - - l - - -

ta - - l - di - - lki - - lta - - tom - - l - - -

ta - - di - - lki - - - lta - - - tom - - -
môrā

... ta kdi ki ŋa tom...
... ta dì kì ŋa tom...
... ta kì kì ŋa tom...
... lìm ...
... ta kì kì ŋa tom...
... ta dì kì ŋa tom...
... ta kì kì ŋa tom...

this way it comes sama to sama.

DN: But the one you played starts on the sama and comes to the ēṭuppū.

TKM: That's why I added that 'ta ka' and 'ta ka dì ku' in the môrā.¹

DN: So the style is his, but the 'ta din gi ŋa tom' is yours.

TKM: Right, this is mine.

DN: Let's go on. (stops tape at 5:05)

TKM: This is the same kaŋakkû. I just did it for tišram:

¹Starting on the sama required that he add four additional pulses within the whole composition; this was accomplished by adding two to the second 'x' and four to the third, while removing one pulse from each of the two 'y' figures.
DN: This is ten akṣaras plus two (twelfths), right? Up to this point you've been playing in caturaśra gati, and the way the syllables are, (that is, right on the beats with silence in between) you are making the change to tišra gati inside, right?

TKM: (points at chest) Right. I'm keeping it inside.

DN: Nobody else can hear that.

TKM: Right, they can't hear it.

DN: Only when the mōrā comes...
TKM: Only then will they know.

(Further listening, then TKM stops at 6:00)

That figure is from rūpaka tāla:

\[ \text{Ita - ta ki ta ta ila jo nu} \]
\[ \text{ta ka ta lki ta ta ka din - l k t t k t r k t tom} \]

this pattern will work very nicely as a bharata nātyam aḍavu. You were there that day, when I told Viswa I had composed a bharata nātyam jati for tiśram. He asked me to recite it. It will be good in a tillana in tiśra gati ādi tāla.

\[ \text{Ita - ta ki ta ta ila jo nu} \]
\[ \text{ta ka ta lki ta ta ka din - l k t t k t r k t tom} \]
\[ \text{Ita - ta ki ta ta ila jo nu} \]
\[ \text{ta ka ta lki ta ta ka din - l k t t k t r k t tom} \]
\[ \text{Ita - ta ki ta ta ila jo nu} \]
\[ \text{ta ka ta lki ta ta ka din - l k t t k t r k t tom} \]
\[ \text{Ita - ta ki ta ta ila jo nu} \]
\[ \text{ta ka ta lki ta ta ka din - l k t t k t r k t tom} \]

four times will come in two āvartas. Then,

\[ \text{Ita - ta ki ta ta ila jo nu} \]
\[ \text{ta ka ta ila ta din - - ta l k t t k t r k t tom} \]

with seven in the end. This also four times
ltā - ta ki ū ta lka jo ŋu
ta ka ta lka ta din - - ta l- k ū t k t r k ū tom
ltā - ta ki ū ta lka jo ŋu
ta ka ta lka ta din - - ta l- k ū t k t r k ū tom
ltā - ta ki ū ta lka jo ŋu
ta ka ta lka ta din - - ta l- k ū t k t r k ū tom

after this, a kōrvai (8:33)

ltā - di - ta - l k ū t k t r k ū tom -
lō - ta - k ū t k t r k ū tom -
ta - l k ū t k t r k ū tom -
l k ū t k t r k ū tom -
l ŋ r k ū tom -

ta - l- di - - - l- - - ki - l- ū ta - - - l tom .. - -

ta - lō - - ki - lta - tom -

ta di l- ki ū ta tom
ta -
ltā di - ki ū ta tom
ltā -
ta di - ki lta tom

This also I conceived as a dance āḍavu.

DN: Have you heard Kuppuswamy?
TKM: I know him. In fact, some of the ideas I used on ‘Krṣnā nī begane baro’ are things I heard him do.² I just used a little here and there. I always really liked his playing. I don’t play for bharata nātyam, but I used to listen to him. There are a couple of others who played really well. Aplai, in Kanchipuram, and in Pandanur, Rajagopalan. I take ideas from dance drumming and practice them.

(more listening, stopping at 9:19)

DN: Tell me a little about that.

TKM: First I started out just with the sol

\[ \begin{align*}
  &\text{ta - di - ki - ta - tom} \\
  &\text{ta - di - ki - ta - tom} \\
  &\text{ta - di - ki - ta - tom} \\
  &\text{ta - di - ki - ta - tom}
\end{align*} \]

just the pattern. Then the full version

\[ \begin{align*}
  &\text{din - nan k t t k ta ki ta} \\
  &\text{  nan k t t k ta ki ta} \\
  &\text{   di na k t t k}
\end{align*} \]

It’s eighteen.

DN: I was able to hear the eighteen, but not the phrases. You have played it so fast. Then comes the körvai (begins at 7:19)

TKM: This is the körvai I was talking about before:

²He refers to the concert in Delhi with T.Viswanathan the previous January, which was part of their receiving the President’s Award
ltâ - ta di - di lki - ki ṭa - ṭa ltom - ltom

   ta di ki ṭa ltom -
   ta ka ta ldi ki ṭa ltom -
   ta lka di ku ta di ki lṭa ltom

the mōrā will come as three sevens

   ta ka ta di ki ṭa ltom -
   ta ka ta di ki ṭa ltom -
   ta ka ta di ki ṭa ltom

you can also have this five, seven nine.

DN: Or nine, seven, five...

TKM: Right. If you play this kōrvai in caturaśra naḍai it will come sama to sama.

DN: But your way, the first repetition leaves two syllables extra, then four, and then resolves. If you want to do these things, the tāḷa keeping must be really good. (continuing with tape; TKM stops at 8:05)
TKM: There, that is

    ta ka jo ṇu tam -
    ta ki ṭa tam -
    ta ka tam -
    ta [tam]

    this is a variation on
    ta ka jo ṇu tam -
    ta ka jo ṇu tam -
    ta ka jo ṇu [tam]³

TKM: (stops at 8:05); I have shown the cḍuppu with that mörā; now, from the middle of beat six,

ltā ki ṭa
    ta di ki ṭa tom -
    ta di ki ṭa tom -
    ta di ki ṭa tom
        ta ka jo ṇu tam -
    ta ki ṭa tam -
    ta ka tam -
    ta [tam]

and then,

³He played the latter six times in succession, ending each time at a half-beat, and finally resolving with the variation at cḍuppu, cycle 52; this is an interesting example of the permissibility of mörās with more than three 'x' figures and more than two 'y' figures, when they are demonstrably variations on accepted paradigms, or at least orderly reductions, especially in gopucca yati
Ita ka

ta di - ki ṭa tom

ta di - ki ṭa tom

ta di - ki ṭa tom

   ta ka jo ṇu tam -
   ta ki ṭa tam l-
   ta ka tam -
   ta [tam]

or, from the sixth beat,

Ita ka ta ki ṭa

ta l- di - ki ṭa tom

ta - di - ki ṭa tom

ta - di - ki ṭa tom

   ta ka jo ṇu tam -
   ta ki ṭa tam l-
   ta ka tam -
   ta [tam]

like that, leaving three at the beginning, I was just developing it.

DN: (stops tape at 9:00) We've discussed this one:

TKM: Right, this is from bharata nātyam;
You can also have

```plaintext
ta - di - ki ta tom
```

I just added that ‘ta’, to make it easier to put the tālā.

DN: This is your körvai, right?

TKM: Right, this is mine. I made one that’s guaranteed not to miss. My teacher gave this one:
This will come very easily for tišram. You just have to get a grip (on the tišram). I changed it just a little;
\textit{ta - \textit{di} - ta ka k\textit{di} na}
\textit{ta - \textit{di} \textit{l} - ta - \textit{l} - ta \textit{ki} ki \textit{ta} tom -}
\textit{ta \textit{ki} ki \textit{ta} tom -}
\textit{ta \textit{ki} ki \textit{ta} tom -}

\textit{di - \textit{ta} ka \textit{di} na}
\textit{ta - \textit{l} - \textit{di} - \textit{ta} - \textit{l} -}
\textit{ta \textit{di} ki \textit{ta} tom \textit{l} -}
\textit{ta \textit{di} ki \textit{ta} tom \textit{l} -}
\textit{ta \textit{di} ki \textit{ta} tom \textit{l} -}

\textit{ta ka \textit{di} na}
\textit{ta - \textit{l} - \textit{di} - \textit{ta} - \textit{l} -}
\textit{ta \textit{di} ki \textit{ta} tom \textit{l} -}
\textit{ta \textit{di} ki \textit{ta} tom \textit{l} -}
\textit{ta \textit{di} ki \textit{ta} tom \textit{l} -}

This they won't be able to make a tāla mistake in.

DN: (plays the tape, stops at 9:55) And this?

TKM: If you want to play something for khanḍa gati, first you have to be sure it works in khanḍa cāpu tāla, sama to sama. This is also true for tiśram. You have to check it for rūpaka tāla.

\textit{ta - \textit{t r d n k t} : k t k t r k t t k d i n -}

that

\textit{t r d n k t t k t k t r k t t k}

is eight, so
is ten.

Ita di - ta lka jo nu jo nu tan - gu
di - Ita ka jo nu jo lnu tan - gu
   ta lka jo nu jo nu tan - gu

ta di lki ta tom
ta di lki ta tom
ta di lki ta tom -

   ta khi ki ta tom
   ta khi ki ta tom
   ta khi ki ta tom -

Ita di ki ta tom
Ita di ki ta tom
Ita di ki ta tom

once you get it settled, you can't miss.

DN: (runs tape to end of solo) That last körvai leaves one syllable out at the beginning of each repetition.

TKM: That's right.

DN: It's your körvai?

TKM: Mine.
I- ta ta - lki ta - ta lka - din ta I-
    ta - - I - - - I - ta di lki ta tom
    ta I ta - ki ta I - ta ka - ldi ta -
    ta I - - - I - - Ita di ki ta I to
    ta ta - lki ta - ta lka - din ta I-
    ta - - I - - - I -
    ta di lki ta tom - I-
    ta di ki I ta tom - -
    Ita di ki ta tom - -

ta I di ki ta tom I-
    ta di ki lta to

ta di ldi ki ta to

ta kdi ki ta tom

eyou can also make it with tišram

ta ta - ki ta - Ita ka - din - ta I-
    ta - - - I - - - ta k I - I it k to
    ta to k I - I it k to

di - Ita ta - ki ta - Ita ka - din - ta I-
    ta - - - I - - - ta k I - I it k to
    ta ka kdi tu ta tu ki Ita - ta ka - din I ta -
    ta - - I - - - ta I ta I k to k to I k to
    lta k I - I it k to k to I k to
    lta k I - I it k to k to

this will be simple.

DN: The compositions all seem to be your own.
TKM: My teacher would make möräs and all out of this phrase

\[
ta \ ka \ ta \ ri \ ki \ ta \ ki \ ta \ ta \ ka \ ta \ ri \ ki \ ta \ ta \ ka
\]

so you start with this mörā, sama to sama.

\[
lt\ a \ ka \ ta \ ri \ ki \ ta \ ki \ ta \ ka \ l\ a \ ka \ ta \ ri \ ki \ ta \ ta \ ka
\]

\[
lt\ a \ j\ an \ - \ gu \ tom -
\]

\[
ta \ ka \ l\ a \ ri \ ki \ ta \ ki \ ta \ ka \ l\ a \ ri \ ki \ ta \ ka
\]

\[
ta \ j\ an \ l- \ gu \ tom -
\]

\[
ta \ ka \ ta \ ri \ l\ ki \ ta \ ki \ ta \ ta \ ka \ ta \ ri \ l\ ki \ ta \ ta \ ka
\]

\[
ta \ j\ an \ - \ gu \ [tom]
\]

this is the base. From this you develop it, little by little

\[
lt\ - t \ k\ t\ r \ k\ ti \ k\ ti \ ti \ k\ ti \ k\ ti \ ti \ k
\]

\[
ta \ din - ta - din l- ta - - tom -
\]

\[
ta - lt \ k\ t\ r \ k\ ti \ k\ ti \ k\ ti \ k\ ti \ ti \ k
\]

\[
lt\ a \ din \ - ta - din - ta - l- - tom -
\]

\[
ta - t \ k\ t\ r \ l\ ki \ k\ ti \ ti \ k\ ti \ k\ ti \ ti \ k
\]

\[
ta \ din l- ta - din - ta - - [tom] (64)^4
\]

In this way, fully developed,

---

^4The preceding möräs are recited at the same speed. I have shifted into a speed of notation that reflects more accurately the inner counting mṛdaṅgam players use. The sixteen syllable phrase that was spelled out in full in the first two möräs is now represented without vowels, and should be assumed to have the value of eight, rather than sixteen, pulses.
once I focus on a type like this, I'll set up different versions of it; three kārvai, four kārvai, no kārvai, whatever. I use the the original; the old sampradaya. I won't deviate from it; I'm not saying the the new things aren't good—they are, but I don't have any taste for them.

DN: I understand. Nobody else is doing what you’re doing.

TKM: I stick to the old things. I don't hear the same clarity in the new things. Nowadays they play in eleven per beat. What's the justification? It's impossible to say what naḍai that is. If your hands are good you can play
śaṅkīra naḍai, but now they're also playing eleven and fifteen. You can't do that. If you play fifteen, it will take two beats, and the middle is seven-and-a-half. Seven-and-a-half! Where is that place?

DN: But the tavil vidvans do it, and you're certainly able to recite it, but you won't play it?

TKM: I won't. I know how, I understand it, but I don't think one should do it. What more do you want to know?

DN: Not a thing. This has been a great pleasure. Thank you.

---

5I think he's saying that there's always an underlying caturaśra jāti base when they do it, so that all these things are based on underlying fours. Two examples; Ranga, in playing what he called aḍaippu, always started with fours and then overlaid them with other jātis.
DN: This is the second interview with Karaikudi R. Mani, and we're going to listen to, and talk about, the tani avartanam you played with Mr. Jayaraman on February 28 at Sastri Hall. So let's start the tape, and if there's something I want to ask about, I'll stop it, or if there's something you want to comment on, we'll stop it. (stops at 1:30) Would you mind reciting that phrase?

RM: When I first start out a solo, I will begin like this with some solkaṭṭu patterns; when I'm finished with those I'll play a kōrvai.

DN: Do you go through phrases to find out how things sound, and what comes to your hand on a particular day?

RM: No, this is already settled. (there's no doubt about it)

\[
\text{ta - ki ūta ka ta ki ūta ka tan - gu tom}
\]

this is eight akṣaras—or sixteen. Then

\[
\text{din - tan - gu}
\]
\[
\text{ta - ki ūta ka ta ki ūta ka tan - gu tan - gu tom}
\]

then

\[
\text{tan - gu tan - gu tan - gu tom}
\]
I will adjust before that. It's just a phrase.

DN: (plays tape, stops at 2:13) Now these things are all ending on the sama.

RM: These are all half-āvartana arudis.

Ita di ki ta lom
    ta tom - l- -

    ta di liki ta tom
    ta lka ta di ki lta tom
        ta tom l- - -
        ta lom - - -

    Ita di ki ta lom
    ta ka ta di ki ta lom
    lta ka di ku lta di ki ta lom
        ta tom - l- -
        ta tom l- - -
        ta [tom]

DN: It's almost better if they land on the sama.

RM: Of course. I always compose these two- and three-akṣara arudis for the sama, so we can be sure about that. Because we are always depending on others. Otherwise, if you just start with a kōr vai, it's a long time until the next sama. This way we can be sure we are correct.

DN: To put the tāla, you mean?

---

1The figures all have to land on the sama, and he is increasing the duration by three pulses each time. The extra three pulses are obtained by shortening the previous phrase by the same amount.
RM: Of course. I design it so that it's safe. It's easier to put the tāḷa also.

DN: I've often noticed about your things that as difficult as they are to play—for example, I can't even recite this one because it's too fast for me, but I can almost always put the tāḷa correctly.

RM: I always compose like this.

DN: (plays tape, stops at 3:50) I want to stop there; that's in two speeds, single and double, and it is a kōrvai, right? And you've done it twice.

RM: Yeah.

DN: Why twice?

RM: The slow tempo is one, and the fast tempo is one.

DN: Now this is something I've only encountered before in Mr. Raghu's solo. He has also done something in two tempos, caturaśram and tiśram, and when I asked him about it, because I have always been taught that a kōrvai may be played one time, or three times\(^1\), he said "Yes, once in each kāla."

RM: Right.

DN: I just want people who read this to know that both you and Mr. Raghu are in agreement that in this type of case, playing a composition twice is a perfectly legitimate thing to do. You could also play it twice in the slow kāḷa, and once in the fast, right?

RM: No, once slow and once fast, or three times slow and three times fast.

DN: You wouldn't do it twice slow and once fast?

RM: No, there is no point in playing the first kāḷa a second time.

\(^1\)But not twice.
DN: So there's no particular magic about doing something three times; you can consider this as doing it once—once and once. In that sense one and one do not make two.

RM: No, no. One and one. Because the tempo is different. So the slow kāla is one time, and the fast kāla is one time. No dispute. Palghat Mani Iyer used to play like this quite often. He inspired me to compose these types of kōrvais. I've composed so many of them—first kāla, then second kāla.

DN: You've gone further than that. I've heard some of your things that start out, say in caturaśram and go through maybe four stages...

RM: Actually, four, five, six, seven, eight. I took a particular stroke (pattern) and I played for caturaśram, and then make it khaṇḍam, then tiśram, miśram, and double caturaśram. And I come direct (from one to the next)

DN: Okay (plays tape, stops at 5:10) Again, this is something you only play once. Is that because of the structure of it?

RM: No, it's because I wanted to give more material for you, so I didn't want to repeat it. This kōrvai consists of caturaśram and tiśram in one kōrvai: it's all built on the phrase,

\[ ta - di - ta ri ki \, ta \, ta \, ka \, ta \, na \, ta \, ka \, ta \, ri \, ki \, ta \, ta \, ka \]

so the first time,
Ita - di - Ita ri ki ṭa Ita ka ta na Ita ka ta ri lki ṭa ta ka
Ita ka di na
Ita ka di na
Ita ka di na Itom - - - -

ta ka lđi na
ta ka lđi na
ta ka ldi na tom - - - -

Ita ka di na
Ita ka di na
Ita ka di na Itom - - - -

three times ‘ta ka di na’, and in the end three kărvais; then

ta - lđi - ta ri lki ṭa ta ka lđa na ta ka lđa ri ki ṭa lđa ka
ta ka lđi na
ta ka ldi na tom - - -

ta ka lđi na
ta ka lđi na tom - - -

ta ka lđi na
ta ka lđi na tom - - -

and the third time

ta - lđi - ta ri lki ṭa ta ka lđa na ta ka lđa ri ki ṭa lđa ka
ta ka lđi na tom -
Ita ka di na Itom -
ta ka lđi na tom -
at this point you get sansam. From here I made it tišram. The simplified version is

Ita ka di na
ta ka kdi na
ta ka di na
    Ita di ki ta tom
ta lka di na
ta ka di lna
ta ka di na
    ta kdi ki ta tom
        ta di liki ta tom
ta ka di lna
ta ka di na
    ta lka di na
        ta di ki lta tom
            ta di ki ta ltom
            ta di ki ta tom [tam]

in place of that 'ta ka di na' you play 'k t k ta -'

DN: That particular way of shaping a phrase, ending the first time with
ta di ki ta tom

and the second time with

ta di ki ta tom
ta di ki ta tom

---

3He means you land on an even beat, which has not happened until now. This is apparently an idiosyncratic use of the word sama.
and the third time with

ta di ki ṭa tom
ta di ki ṭa tom
ta di ki ṭa tom

in my mind I associate that with the Tanjore Vaidyanatha Iyer style. Is that
how you think of it?

RM: Actually, this is a later development. To my knowledge, I found this one.
Maybe they were doing it and I never heard it. They always played

ta di ki ṭa tom
ta di ki ṭa tom
ta di ki ṭa tom

then

ta di - ki ṭa tom
ta di - ki ṭa tom
ta di - ki ṭa tom

and

ta - di - ki ṭa tom
ta - di - ki ṭa tom
ta - di - ki ṭa tom

it’s only in the last twelve to fifteen years that we get

ta di ki ṭa tom

then
ta di - ki ta tom
ta di - ki ta tom

and ending

ta - di - ki ta tom
ta - di - ki ta tom
ta - di - ki ta tom

DN: So this type of thinking is your own?

RM: I think so. Sometimes I compose things; how they come I don't know. (plays tape; stops at 5:13)

RM: These patterns Mani lyer used to play, but now, even among people who are trained to play it, nobody can get the same sound.

DN: The sound you are getting is great. (plays tape, stops at 6:44)

RM: This particular körvai, starts from 'tom'. Usually we start the körvais from the right side. All the solkāṭṭu starts from the right side. But this one,

gu gu da na ki ta jo nu ta na

starts and ends with the 'tom'. The other körvai goes like this
the usual thing is for it to end

ki ta tom
ki ta tom
ki ta tom [ta]

this ends
ki ṭa tom
ki ṭa tom
ki ṭa [tom]

This type of idea, Mr. K. M. Vaidyanathan taught me. He helped me so much during my scholarship period. It was only after my association with him that I got the knowledge to compose like this. (plays tape, stops at 9:00) This type of pattern, Mani Iyer used to play.

DN: You used every part of the pattern.⁴

RM: Yes. He would not play this much elaboration.

DN: (plays tape, stops at 13:23) The particular composition you just played was one of Ranga’s real favorites. What can you tell me about this one? When did you come up with it?

RM: I don’t know when exactly, but it’s all miśram.

ldin - nan k ṭ t t k di na ldin - di na tan k ṭ t k
din na tan k ṭ t t k di na ldin - di na tan k ṭ t k
din - nan k ṭ t k di na ldin - di na tan k ṭ t k
ta - tom - -
ta l- tom - -
ta - [tom]

the second time,

⁴The pattern, a repeated sarvalaghu figure, is shifted so that every part of it falls on the beat at one time or another.
ta ka tom - - -
ta ka tom - - -
ta ka [tom]

and the third time,

ta tom - - -
ta ka tom - - -
ta ki ta [tom]

so the whole thing,
ita - tom - - -
ta l- tom - - -
ta -

ita - ton - gu
ta ka ita - ton - gu
ta ka ldi ku ta - ton - gu

ita - ton - gu
ta ka ita - ton - gu
ta ka ldi ku ta - ton - gu

ita - ton - gu
ta ka ita - ton - gu
ta ka ldi ku ta - ton - gu

ita di ki ta tom
ta di lki ta tom
ta di ki ta ltom tam -

ta di ki ta ltom
ta di ki ta tom
ta ldi ki ta tom tam -

ta ldi ki ta tom
ta di ki lta tom
ta di ki ta tom

after that
Ita - ton - gu
ta - lton - gu
ta - ton - lgu

ta ka ta - ton - lgu
ta ka ta - ton - lgu
ta ka ta - ton - lgu
ta ka di ku ta - lton - gu
ta ka di ku lta - ton - gu
ta ka ldi ku ta - ton - gu

and then I will make the mōrā three, five, seven;

Ita ki ṭa
ta ki ṭa
ta lki ṭa ta -
ta - ta lki ṭa
ta - ta ki ṭa
Ita - ta ki ṭa ta -
Ita - di - ta ki ṭa
Ita - di - ta ki ṭa
Ita - di - ta ki ṭa

and then, instead of

ta - ton - gu.
ta ka ta - ton - gu
ta ka di ku ta - ton - gu
I will make it

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta ka ta & ka ton - gu} \\
\text{ta ka di & ku ta ka ton - gu}
\end{align*}
\]

just to give it some 'kick'—then reverse the mōrā, seven, five, and three.

DN: Didn't you also compose things in this style for tiśram?

RM: Of course. For khaṇḍam also. Usually, the other artists, the elders, if they played tiśram, they will come like this from caturaśram:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ita ka ta & di lnata ki ta} \\
\text{Ita ka ta & di lnata ki ta} \\
\text{Ita ka ta & di lnata ki ta} \\
\text{Ita ka ta & di lnata ki ta} \\
\text{tiśram} \\
\text{Ita & - - din - l- din - ta -} \\
\text{ldin & t r k t & din - l- din - ta -}
\end{align*}
\]

even Mani lyer used to play like this. Palani Subramania Pillai would take it differently. He would play the same pattern for caturaśram, and then for tiśram:

\[
\begin{align*}
caturaśram & \\
\text{ldin & - nan t r lk t & ta ki ta} \\
\text{ldin & - nan t r lk t & ta ki ta} \\
tiśram & \\
\text{ldin & - nan t r k t & ta lki ta} \\
\text{din & - nan t r lk t & ta ki ta} \\
\text{din & - lnan t r k t & ta ki ta}
\end{align*}
\]
at some point I thought I'd like to elaborate on this idea. I started by taking a tiśram idea; in caturaśram it should come as six or twelve akṣaras. In tiśram it will come in samam.5

ldin - nan k ṭ t k ta di na ldin -
di na ldin - nan k ṭ t k ta di na ldin -
di na kdi na din - lnan k ṭ t k ta lki ta
   ta ka kdi na ta ki lṭa di na - lṭom - - -

the kārvai should be four (lṭom - - -)

DN: Right, so you can reduce it

RM: Yes. So,
caturaśram

ldin - nan k ṭ lt k ta di na ldn -
di na ldn - nan k ṭ lt k ta di na ldn -
di na ldi na din - lnan k ṭ t k ta lki ṭa
ta ka ldi na ta ki ṭa di na - ltom --
tiśram

ldin - nan k ṭ t k ta ldi na din -
di na ldn - nan k ṭ t k ta ldi na din -
di na ldi na din - nan k ṭ lt k ta ki ṭa
ta ka ldi na ta ki ṭa di lna - tom --

ldin - nan k ṭ t k ta ldi na din -
di na ldn - nan k ṭ t k ta ldi na din -
di na ldi na din - nan k ṭ lt k ta ki ṭa
ta ka ldi na ta ki ṭa di lna - tom --

ldin - nan k ṭ t k ta ldi na din -
di na ldn - nan k ṭ t k ta ldi na din -
di na ldi na din - nan k ṭ lt k ta ki ṭa
ta ka ldi na ta ki ṭa di lna - tom --

from here it's the körvai
like this I made for tiśram, khaṇḍa, miśram. The same type.

DN: Would you show me the khaṇḍam?

RM: Sure
there you get five kārvai. That way it will always come to samam; that

\[ \text{ta } \text{tom } k \, \text{t } t \, k \]

is four,

\[ \text{t } k \, \text{ta } \text{tom } k \, \text{t } t \, k \]

is five,

\[ \text{t } k \, d \, k \, \text{ta } \text{tom } k \, \text{t } t \, k \]

is six, and in the beginning,

\[ \text{ta } \text{di } \text{na tan } k \, \text{t } t \, k \]
\[ \text{di } \text{na tan } k \, \text{t } t \, k \]
\[ \text{di nan } k \, \text{t } t \, k \, t \, \text{din} - g \, \text{tom} - \]

you get six (ta \, di \, na tan \, k \, \text{t } t \, k), five (di \, na tan \, k \, \text{t } t \, k), four (di \, nan \, k \, \text{t } t \, k), three (t \, \text{din} - g), two (tom -), so twenty. In caturaśram it will come in five aksaras.
caturāśram

Ita di na tan l k t t k
   di na tan k t t k
   di nan k t t k t din - g tom -

Ita di na tan l k t t k
   di na tan k t t k
   di nan k t t k t din - g tom -

Ita di na tan l k t t k
   di na tan k t t k
   di nan k t t k t din - g tom -

   Ita tom k t t k
   lt k ta tom k t lt k
   t k d k ta ltom k t t k ta l - - -

khandam

Ita di na tan k t lt k
   di na tan k t lt k
   di nan k t t k lt din - g tom -

Ita di na tan k t lt k
   di na tan k t lt k
   di nan k t t k lt din - g tom -

Ita di na tan k t lt k
   di na tan k t lt k
   di nan k t t k lt din - g tom -

   Ita tom k t t k
   t k lta tom k t t k
   t k d k ta tom k t t k lta - - -
so far, everything is coming in four akṣaras. Then it will come as three

lītā di na tan k ṭ ṭ ṭ lt ṭ k
   di na tan k ṭ ṭ ṭ lt ṭ k
      di nan k ṭ ṭ ṭ k

lītā di na tan k ṭ ṭ ṭ lt ṭ k
   di na tan k ṭ ṭ ṭ lt ṭ k
      di nan k ṭ ṭ ṭ k

lītā di na tan k ṭ ṭ ṭ lt ṭ k
   di na tan k ṭ ṭ ṭ lt ṭ k
      di nan k ṭ ṭ ṭ k

lītā di na tan k ṭ ṭ ṭ lt ṭ k
   di na tan k ṭ ṭ ṭ lt ṭ k
      di nan k ṭ ṭ ṭ k

   lītā tom k ṭ ṭ ṭ k
      t k lītā tom k ṭ ṭ ṭ k
         t k kd ṭ k ta tom k ṭ ṭ ṭ k lītā - - -

after that, two akṣaras
ltadīna tānk tūt k
   di nan k t t k

ltadīna tānk tūt k
   di nan k t t k

ltadīna tānk tūt k
   di nan k t t k

ltadīna tānk tūt k
   di nan k t t k

ltadīna tānk tūt k
   di nan k t t k

ltadīna tānk tūt k
   di nan k t t k

ltatom k t t k
   t k ltatom k t t k
   t k ldk tataatom k t t k lton - - -

then the körvai
I'm not sure what the text in the image means. It looks like it might be a mix of different characters.

After that I will develop in khandam.
ita - - din - l- din - na ka
ita ta ka din - l- din - na ka
ita - - din - l- din - na ka
ita ta ka din - l- din - na ka
ita - - din - l- din - na ka
ita ta ka din - l- din - na ka

ita ta - - di kdi - - ki ki l- na na - l- tom tom - -
ita ta - - di kdi - - ki ki l- na na - l- tom tom - -
ita ta - - di kdi - - ki ki l- na na - l- tom tom - -

ita ta - di di l- ki ki - na lna - tom tom -
ita ta - di di l- ki ki - na lna - tom tom -
ita ta - di di l- ki ki - na lna - tom tom -

ita ta di di ki lki na na tom tom

the same four, three, two, one.

DN: Well, when we get back to this mišram, there's some very similar
development going on.

RM: Yeah, let's listen to that. (plays tape, stops at 15:52) this one, first

\[ \text{ldin} - \text{ta din} - \text{din} - \text{ita din} - \text{din} - \text{ta din} \]

\[ \text{ta din} - \]

\[ \text{tam} - \]

\[ \text{ta ldin} - \]

\[ \text{tam} - \]

\[ \text{ta din} - \]

then, two of them
kdin - ta din - din - ta din -
ta ka di na
tan - gu

ta ka di na

tan - gu

ta ka di na

then after one

kdin - ta din -
ta ta lika di na

tan - gu

ta ta ka di na

tan - l- gu

ta ta ka di na

then for six

ta di - ki ta tom
	tam - tam -

ta di - liki ta tom
	tam - tam - l-

ta di - ki ta tom

see, the first one,

ta din - tam -

is three, with two kārvai. The second is four, with three kārvai, the third is five with four kārvai, then six with five kārvai. Do you understand?
DN: Yes, it works because there are five parts to a mōrā.⁶

RM: Right; and after that,

\[ \text{ta di - ki ū ta tom} \]
\[ \text{ta kī - ki ū ta tom} \]
\[ \text{ta di l- ki ū ta tom -} \]
\[ \text{ta di l- ki ū ta tom} \]
\[ \text{ta di l- ki ū ta tom} \]
\[ \text{ta di - ki ū ū ta tom} \]
\[ \text{ta di - ki ū ū tom} \]
\[ \text{ta di - ki ū ū tom [ta]} \]

because you have to have some ending for that. (stops tape at 16:00) here
it's six and eight.

---

⁶And if you expand each of them by one, the leader figure must diminish by five each
time; thus, 15+13, 10+18, 5+21, 0+28
ta - di - ta - ta lka di mi ta ka jo ṇu

tam - - di ta ka jo ṇu
tam - - di ta ka ljo ṇu
tam - - di ta lka jo ṇu ta - - -

and then (starts 16:30)
ita - di - ta ka di lna
di - ta ka di na
ita ka di na
ta ka tom l-
ta ka tom -
ta ka ltom -- -- -- --

ita - di - ta ka di lna
di - ta ka di na
ita ka di na
ta ka tom l-
ta ka tom -
ta ka ltom -- -- -- --

ita - di - ta ka di lna
di - ta ka di na
ita ka di na
ta ka tom l-
ta ka tom -
ta ka ltom -- -- -- --

ita di ki ta tom
ta di lki ta tom
ta di ki ta ltom

ta - di - ki ta ltom
ta - di - ki ta ltom
ta - di - ki ta ltom

ta - di - ki - lta - tom
ta - di - lki - ta - tom
ta - lki - ki - ta - tom
so when I start mišram, that

din - nan k t t k ta di na din -

is one set. Then

ta - - din - - din - - na - - ta ka

is another set. Then

din - ta din - ta - - ta di ki ta tom
din - ta din - din - ta din -
ta din -
   tam -
ta din -
   tam -
ta din -

another set, and

ta - di - ta - ta ka di mi ta ka jo ṇu

One by one I will play, or all together, so that the people get more enjoyment.

DN: You set it up so they can follow it.

RM: Yes, one by one by one. (stops tape at 16:49)
this type Palani used to play. I don't usually play this type of thing for my concerts. I did it only for your recording; a little of Mani Iyer, a little of Palani...

DN: Yeah, they really have a different way of approaching miṣram.

RM: And you know how far that is from my style, and I just wanted to show that. (stops at 17:50) This one just seven akṣaras:

    ta - din - ta din -
    - - din - ta din -
    - - din - ta din -
    - - din - ta din -
    ta ki ta ta ka jo ṇu

    ta - din - ta din -
    - - din - ta din -
    - - din - ta din -
    - - din - ta din -
    ta ki ta ta ka jo ṇu

    ta - din - ta din -

    lta ki ta ta ka jo ṇu ltom - -
    ki ta ta ka ljo ṇu tom - -
    ta ta ilka jo ṇu tom - -
    ta ilka jo ṇu tom - -
    ka ljo ṇu tom - -
    jo ṇu ltom - -
    nu tom - -
    lta - - - - -
ita ki た ta ka jo ぬ tom - -
 き た ta ka ljo ぬ tom - -
 た ta יק jo ぬ tom - -
 た ta יק jo ぬ tom - -
 き ljo ぬ tom - -
 jo ぬ tom - -
 nu tom - -
 icta - - - - -

ita ki た ta ka jo ぬ tom - -
 き た ta ka ljo ぬ tom - -
 た ta יק jo ぬ tom - -
 た ta יק jo ぬ tom - -
 き ljo ぬ tom - -
 jo ぬ tom - -
 nu tom - -[ta]

(stops tape at 18:59) this ʨorvai

ita ka di mi ta ki た ta ica - tom - -
ta ka ldi mi ta ki た ta - ica - tom - -
ta ka ldi mi ta ki た ta - ʨi - た - tom - -

ita - - ka - - ta l - di - - ʨi - ʦa - - tom - -

ita - ka - ta - di l - ʨi - た - tom -
ita - ka - ta - di l - ʨi - た - tom -

ita ka ta di ki た tom
ita ka ta di ki た tom
ita ka ta di ki た tom
this one, the first speed is once, the second is twice, and the third is three times.

DN: That’s a very interesting application. (plays solo to end) What in the world was that (big) mōrā?

RM: Usually, they play a caturaśra mōrā, and sometimes they play a tiśra mōrā, sometimes they play a khaṇḍa mōrā. I wanted to play tiśra and khaṇḍa together.
khaṇḍa
ltan - gu ta ka ldi na ta ki ṭa
tiṣra
lt ta ka tan - gu ta lka di na ta ki ṭa
khaṇḍa
ltan - gu ta ka ldi na ta ki ṭa
tiṣra
lt ta ka di na ta ka ldi na tom - - -
khaṇḍa
ltan - gu ta ka ldi na ta ki ṭa
tiṣra
lt ta ka tan - gu ta lka di na ta ki ṭa
khaṇḍa
ltan - gu ta ka ldi na ta ki ṭa
tiṣra
lt ta ka di na ta ka ldi na tom - - -
khaṇḍa
ltan - gu ta ka ldi na ta ki ṭa
tiṣra
lt ta ka tan - gu ta lka di na ta ki ṭa
khaṇḍa
ltan - gu ta ka ldi na ta ki ṭa
tiṣra
lt ta ka di na tom -
lt ta ka tan - gu ta lka di na ta ki ṭa
lt ta ka di na tom -
lt ta ka tan - gu ta lka di na ta ki ṭa
lt ta ka di na ta ka ltan - gu
ta ka di lna ta ka tan - gu
lt ta ka di na ta ka [tam]
so third time, that ‘tan - gu’ would come on the sama, so I composed the körvai so it started with ‘tan - gu’; that link should be there.

\[ \text{ltan - gu ta ka di lna ta ki ṭa ta - l-} \]
\[ \text{ta ka ta - lka din - tan - gu to} \text{m} \quad \text{---} \]
\[ \text{lt} \text{a ka tan - gu ta lka di na ta ki ṭa lta} \quad \text{---} \]
\[ \text{ta ka lta - ka din - tan l- gu to} \text{m} \quad \text{--- l-} \]
\[ \text{ta ka di ku lta - gu ta ka di lna ta ki ṭa ta - l-} \]
\[ \text{ta ka ta - lka din - tan - gu to} \text{m} \quad \text{---} \]

\[ \text{lt} \text{a} \quad \text{---} \quad \text{l- di} \quad \text{--- l-} \quad \text{---} \]
\[ \text{ta ki lṭa ta di ki ṭa to} \text{m} \]

\[ \text{lt} \text{a} \quad \text{---} \quad \text{l- di} \quad \text{--- l-} \quad \text{---} \]
\[ \text{ta ki lṭa ta di ki ṭa to} \text{m} \]
\[ \text{lt} \text{a ki ṭa ta di ki lṭa to} \text{m} \]
\[ \text{ta - - l- - di} \quad \text{--- l-} \quad \text{---} \]
\[ \text{lt} \text{a ki ṭa ta di ki lṭa to} \text{m} \]
\[ \text{ta ki ṭa ta di ki ṭa to} \text{m} \]
\[ \text{ta ki lṭa ta di ki ṭa to} \text{m} \]

when you play the three times, three varieties; second time,
third time,

\[ lta - ki - ta - lta - di - ki - lta - tom - \]
\[ ta ki lta ta di ki ta tom \]

\[ lta - ki - ta - lta - di - ki - lta - tom - \]
\[ ta ki lta ta di ki ta tom \]
\[ lta ki ta ta di ki lta tom \]

\[ ta - ki - lta - ta - di - lki - ta - tom - \]
\[ lta ki ta ta di ki lta tom \]
\[ ta ki lta ta di ki ta tom \]
\[ ta ki lta ta di ki ta tom \]

DN: Another thing you've done that's a real change, is that you've introduced the notion of rehearsal, at least to some extent. I'm thinking of a concert I heard in which you and Harishankar played a tani āvartanam in khaṇḍa cāpu tālā. Certain kōrvais, you would play one line, and he would play the next, and you alternated like that.
RM: Right. In SRUTILAYA we compose like this, so we tried it for a concert, just for a change. You wouldn’t have heard that type of tani āvartanam in a concert.

DN: You do all the composing for SRUTILAYA, don’t you?

RM: Of course.

DN: So you play something, and Vasan plays something, and Harishankar plays something—that’s all arranged beforehand?

RM: Not all, just the körvais, because we play those all together.

DN: That’s a new thing in the concept of a tāla vādyaa kaccheri, to have material that’s common to all the members so that they can interlock, and pass it around. The only time I’ve ever heard it done in your music before was a concert in the States by Paranel and Kaliyamurthy; they’ve played together so much that it has the same effect as rehearsal. They traded lines of körvais and joined together for the mōrā.

RM: Their tradition is different; if one tavil plays something, the other tavil should repeat the same thing. In our concerts also, if the mṛdaṅgam plays miśram, the gaţam and kanjira should also play miśram. I have changed that for our SRUTILAYA concerts. So if I play tiśram, Harishankar may play khaṇḍam, and the gaţam may play miśram. We should not control their talent. In my ensemble, you play whatever you like. We fix only the körvais. Before any concert we rehearse seven or eight sittings.

DN: Do you also compose the music for the group?

RM: Of course. I can sing, but I don’t know notation, so I sing, and my friend Mr. K. S. Krishnamurthy will write it. After that I will copy it out in my handwriting and distribute for the group.
DN: It's interesting that SRUTILAYA was inspired by your style of composing for the mṛdaṅgam, and now your performance in classical concerts is being influenced by SRUTILAYA.

RM: One thing that has happened is that one person will play something softly while someone else elaborates it. We get these things in rehearsals and just add them in. We polish it and put it in the concert. I don't believe in this jugalbandhi. The musicians meet maybe ten minutes before the concert and decide what they are going to do. I don't think it does justice. Also, we are not talking about two or three people; we are ten or eleven people. It has to be thoroughly rehearsed.

DN: What's in your future?

RM: In playing mṛdaṅgam?

DN: Is playing mṛdaṅgam in your future?

RM: It's not my future.

DN: What is your future?

RM: To keep quiet, because my mind is—I need some rest, physical and mental. There's been some change in my life; my guruji and I have purchased some land for an aśram, and I am starting an educational organization

DN: I'm tremendously grateful for the openness, and the warmth and generosity you've shown me. What you've contributed is immeasurable.

RM: It's my pleasure. I respect so much Mr. Ranganathan. He is really the first man to spread our mṛdaṅgam to the USA. Before that, people would go, and play concerts, take the money and come back. But he stayed, and trained so many people like you, and he used to send his students to me for further study. Thank you very much.
DN: Let's listen to the tāni and when we come to each composition or idea, we can stop and talk about that. (plays tape, stops at 2:25) You mentioned that this is a fairly recent one:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta - di - ta di - ki - } & \text{ta - tom - ta - - -} \\
\text{ta - di ta di - ki - } & \text{ta - tom - ta - - -} \\
\text{ta - ta di - ki - } & \text{ta - tom - ta - - -} \\
\text{ta ta di - ki - } & \text{ta - tom - ta - - -} \\
\text{ta di - ki - ta - } & \text{tom - ta - - -} \\
\text{ta - - - di - - - ki - - - } & \text{ta - - - tom - - -} \\
\text{ta - di - ki - ta - tom -} \\
\text{ta di ki ta tom} \\
\text{ta di ki ta tom} \\
\text{ta di ki ta tom} \\
\text{ta - - tom - -} \\
\text{ta di - ki ta - tom} \\
\text{ta di - ki ta - tom} \\
\text{ta di - ki ta - tom} \\
\text{ta - - tom - -} \\
\text{ta di - - ki ta - - tom} \\
\text{ta di - - ki ta - - tom} \\
\text{ta di - - ki ta - - tom}
\end{align*}
\]
RR: Yes.

DN: Now if I'm right about what's going on there, the first repetition is in caturaśra naḍai, the second is in khaṇḍa, and the third is in tiṣra. When did you compose that one?

RR: I don't remember, but I haven't played that sort of thing in concerts very often.

DN: Why not?

RR: There hasn't been a reason to. It's a matter of the atmosphere—doing all that complicated stuff, people should be able to realize what it is, and appreciate it. On that day there were many musicians, and I felt they would enjoy it. The level of strain, both for the performer and for the tāḷa keeper, and also for the listener—it should be of some value; it should not go to waste. (laughs)

There are different types of audience; some get carried away by the sound—easy, simple stuff, sarvalaghū. Some want this complicated stuff. That's where this application is very, very important. My teacher method of application (was the model) He would do the exact thing he should do at the right moment, the right proportion, to the right people—great man. He'd do something on the spot that hadn't struck your mind, but it would have great effect. The right application. According to me, you may have learned so many things, you may have so much, but the right thing to apply at the right time—that's where you score.

That's why I haven't played that sort of thing often. Skipping from khaṇḍa to tiṣra, it's just one mātra—you have to be very careful there. See, from caturaśram to tiṣram or from caturaśram to khaṇḍam you can go easily, but from khaṇḍam to tiṣram you have to be very careful with this complicated stuff. Unless you are so sure about it, you are likely to miss it.
And also, I have composed this; I know what I am doing, but the tāḷa-keeping artist will find it very difficult—very difficult. So even if he goes fast or slow, I have to just jump with him, or drag with him and come at the exact spot. For that you need a lot of lākṣya—see, in our system one person is keeping tāḷa, another person is playing; two minds. If you’re keeping tāḷa and you’re reciting something, it’s okay. You can keep the tāḷa according to the way it’s proceeding. But if somebody else is keeping tāḷa, for two minds to come together, if you’re playing these complicated things, is something really difficult.

So if you play things like this, you have to be very sure, and very careful, and even if you miss, you have to be able to catch it.

DN: Shall we go on? (plays tape, stops at 5:00) Now tell me about these.

RR: See, it’s just

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{lti } & \text{ tā } \text{ tom } \\
\text{ki } & \text{ lta } \text{ tom } \\
\text{ki } & \text{ tā } \text{ ltom } - - \\
\text{ta l- } & \text{ ki } \text{ tā } \text{ tom } \\
\text{ltā - } & \text{ ki } \text{ tā } \text{ ltom } \\
\text{ta - } & \text{ ki } \text{ lta } \text{ tom } - - \\
\text{ltā - } & \text{ di - lki } \text{ tā } \text{ tom } \\
\text{ta l- } & \text{ di - ki lta } \text{ tom } \\
\text{ta - } & \text{ ldi - ki tā } \text{ [tom]} \\
\end{align*}
\]

three threes, three fives, three sevens.

DN: But it’s not really three threes, because that last

\[
\text{tom } - -
\]
is the kārvai.

RR: Right, there's no 'ta' there when I build it up, but when I played the whole thing, it was

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ki} & \text{ } \text{ta} \text{ } \text{tom} \\
\text{ki} & \text{ } \text{ta} \text{ } \text{tom} \\
\text{ki} & \text{ } \text{ta} \text{ } \text{tom} - - \\
\text{ta} & \text{ } - \text{ } \text{ki} \text{ } \text{ta} \text{ } \text{tom} \\
\text{ta} & \text{ } - \text{ } \text{ki} \text{ } \text{ta} \text{ } \text{tom} \\
\text{ta} & \text{ } - \text{ } \text{ki} \text{ } \text{ta} \text{ } \text{tom} - - \\
\text{ta} & \text{ } - \text{ } \text{di} \text{ } - \text{ } \text{ki} \text{ } \text{ta} \text{ } \text{tom} \\
\text{ta} & \text{ } - \text{ } \text{di} \text{ } - \text{ } \text{ki} \text{ } \text{ta} \text{ } \text{tom} \\
\text{ta} & \text{ } - \text{ } \text{di} \text{ } - \text{ } \text{ki} \text{ } \text{ta} \text{ } \text{tom} \text{[ta]} \\
\end{align*}
\]
there that 'ta' comes. You can do it without also; you can do it both ways.¹

I have played three varieties; first,

   ki  ta  tom
   ki  ta  tom
   ki  ta  tom  -  -

  ta  -  ki  ta  tom
  ta  -  ki  ta  tom
  ta  -  ki  ta  tom  -  -

  ta  -  di  -  ki  ta  tom
  ta  -  di  -  ki  ta  tom
  ta  -  di  -  ki  ta  tom  [ta]

then

  ta  -  di  -  ki  ta  tom
  ta  -  di  -  ki  ta  tom
  ta  -  di  -  ki  ta  tom  -  -

  ta  -  ki  ta  tom
  ta  -  ki  ta  tom
  ta  -  ki  ta  tom  -  -

   ki  ta  tom
   ki  ta  tom
   ki  ta  tom  [ta]

¹Without the final syllable, each repetition of the mörä is 48 pulses, which means starting right with a hand gesture. The version he's doing is 49 pulses, which means starting one pulse before a hand gesture, and makes this much harder to execute.
then

ki ṭa tom
   ta - ki ṭa tom
   ta - di - ki ṭa tom - -

   ta - di - ki ṭa tom
   ta - ki ṭa tom
   ki ṭa tom - -

   ta - ki ṭa tom
   ta - ki ṭa tom
   ta - ki ṭa tom [ta]

last, I played it in tiśram; the same thing; (ending at 5:00)

   ki lṭa tom
   ki ṭa tom
   ki lṭa tom - -

   ta - lki ṭa tom
   ta - ki lṭa tom
   ta - ki ṭa lṭom - -

   ta - di l- ki ṭa tom
   ta - ldi - ki ṭa tom
   ta l- di - ki ṭa tom [ta]

Do you follow?

DN: Yes, I do. Let's go on. (plays tape, stops at 7:00) There's something I want to ask you about this one. I notice that you played this körvai twice, once in caturaśram and once in tiśram.
lt amongst t a something lka - dina - lta - t a l tam -
lt a l tam -
ta l tam -

lt a ka t a d i l t a k a lka - l din - t a -
lt a tam - l-
ta tam l-
ta l tam -

t a lka di ku t a ldi - t a lki t a k a l- din - t a l-
ta tam - l-
ta tam l-
ta tam l-

ta l ldi - - lki - l t a - l tom -
lt a di - lki - t a - l tom -
ta di lki t a tom
ta ldi k i t a tom
lt a di k i t a l tom
ta - t a l - - tom - l tom -

RR: Yes...

DN: That's interesting to me; when we talked about it later, you said that the way you think of it, is not that you did it twice, but that you did it once each.
RR: Yes. Because whether you play in caturaśram or in tiśram, if you start on sama, it will end on sama. It is a three-cycle körvai. So it's enough if you play it once each.

DN: Because it's so long?

RR: Because it's so long, and because it ends on sama. There are some körvais which you have to play twice this way and once that way, in order to arrive at sama. There is no need for that here. If you want to, you can repeat it, but it's just repetition for repetition's sake. Even if you play it once it's okay.

DN: And once in each kāla is also okay. Is this your own composition?

RR: Yes.

DN: I found it extremely orderly...

RR: Yes, it has a symmetry.

DN: It's beautiful. (plays tape, stops at 13:16) You said that this is again your own...

RR: That first bit, where I alternated between khanḍam and caturaśram, the same phrase,

```
caturaśram
I di mi na n an t r l g ċ na di mi
I na g i ċa di l mi na n an t r g ċ
khanḍam
I di mi na t r g ċ l na di mi na ma
I di mi na t r g ċ l na di mi na ma
```

that Palani used to play.

DN: That's also something that Ranga taught
RR: Yes. I took that from Palani. From that I developed further

\[ ldi \ na \ tan \ tr \ g\ d\ lta - \ tom - - \]
(cycles 73-74)

that is my own. And the subsequent

\[ l- - \ din - \ gu \ ldin - \ tan - \ gu \ lta \ ka \ din - \ gu \ ldin - \ tan - \ gu \]
(beginning cycle 76)

I have developed into

\[ lta \ din - \ gu \ din \ l- \ gu \ nan - \ gu \]

that is my own, and the cadence is my own

\[ lta \ din - \ gu \ din \ l- \ gu \ nan - \ gu \]
\[ lta \ ka - ta \ di \ l- \ ki \ ta - \ tom \]
\[ lta \ din - \ gu \ din \ l- \ gu \ nan - \ gu \ ltan - \ gu \]
\[ ta \ ka \ lta \ di \ ki \ ta \ tom \]

that seven,

\[ ta \ ka \ ta \ di \ ki \ ta \ tom \]

I am just spacing it differently

\[ ta \ ka \ ta \ di \ ki \ ta \ tom \]
\[ ta \ ka - ta \ di - ki \ ta - tom \]
\[ ta \ ka - - \ ta \ di - - \ ki \ ta - - tom \]

and so on, and variations on that.
DN: It's beautiful to make a whole körvai out of one phrase...

RR: Yes. That's why all that initial preparation. Then only that körvai has value. If you just start the körvai

    ta ka - - - ta di - - - ki ța - - - tom

where is the beginning, where is the end? It doesn't have meaning at all. For it to have some significance and meaning you must have some buildup for that.
like that you have to go on shifting it, and then start the körvai. Then only it has meaning.
DN: You have to build it up.

RR: Of course. Build-up is something which is very, very, very, very important.

DN: (plays tape, stops at 14:30) Now I want to stop and ask you about that.

RR: Same principle; from eight,

\[ ta \ di \ ki \ \text{-} \ \tau a \ \text{-} \ \text{ka} \ \text{-} \ \text{di} \ \text{-} \ \text{na} \]

you get fourteen:

\[ ta \ di \ - \ ki \ - \ \tau a \ - \ \text{ka} \ - \ \text{di} \ - \ \text{na} \]

and then twenty

\[ ta \ di \ - \ - \ ki \ - \ - \ \tau a \ - \ - \ \text{ka} \ - \ - \ \text{di} \ - \ - \ \text{na} \]

twenty fits in well with khaṇḍam.

DN: (laughs) Yeah, you might say that.

RR: So first you take the eight, and then the fourteen, just to get that color, you know, that variation, then go to twenty. Then twenty, fourteen, eight; with that you make the kōrvaī. Then only you get that symmetry, that grace.

DN: Now this one you played in three consecutive cycles, rather than three times back to back.\(^2\)

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\(^2\)First one begins middle of beat 7, cycle 91; second begins same beat, cycle 94 after a misfired attempt in cycle 93; third begins same place cycle 96, ends at eḍuppu, cycle 98—mūrās are all different.
ltar ta - - ki l - - ta - - ltar ka - - din l - - ta - -
ltar ta - ki - ltar - ta ka - ldin - ta -
ta ltar ki ta ta ka ldnin ta

ta - - ltor - ta di ki lta tomt

ta - - ltor -
tk ta - ltor - ta di lki ta tomt
ta di lki ta tomt

ta - ltor -
ta ka ltar - ltor - ltar di ki ta tomt
ltar di ki ta tomt
ltar di ki ta tomt

ltar ta - - ki l - - ta - - ltar ka - - din l - - ta - -
ltar ta - ki - ltar - ta ka - ldnin - ta -
ta ltar ki ta ta ka ldnin ta

ta - tomt l - ta di ki ta ltorm

ta - tomt - l - gu

ta - ltor - ta di ki ta ltorm
ta di ki ta ltorm
ta - - ltor - -

ta - ltor - ta di ki ta ltorm

ta - -
ta di lki ta tomt
ta -
ltar di ki ta tomt
lta ta - - ki l- - ta - - lta ka - - din l- - ta - -
  lta ta - ki - lta - ta ka - ldin - ta -
  ta lta ki ta ta ka ldin ta

ta - di l- ki ta tom
  ta l- - tom l- -
ta - di l- ki ta tom
ta l- di - ki ta ltom
  ta - - ltom - -
ta l- di - ki ta ltom
ta - di - lki ta tom
ta - ldi - ki ta tom

RR: You can do that, but because it starts in the second drutam; it doesn’t start on sama. It would have to start on the third beat (middle). I felt that if I played it each time coming back to the original phrase, that

ta din - gu din - gu nan - gu

it would have greater effect. So it starts in the same place every time, and then the original phrase, like that. But you can play consecutively; it’s no problem. This way there’s more contrast; the feeling is there.

The main thing in a tani avartanam is that arrangement, the structure. Körvai is after all—you compose something, just practice, and you can play. The buildup, the effect that you bring—in the buildup you get new phrases. I got a new phrase on that day. That

lta din - gu din l- gu nan - gu
lta din - gu din l- gu nan - gu
lta ta ki ta di lki ta nan ki ta
on the spot I got it. Like that you get some new phrase, just catch hold of it, build on it. It doesn’t happen every time; when you get it, just catch hold of it.

DN: Let’s go to the koraippu.

RR: That’s one way of doing it, you know? I had been improvising on this khaṇḍam, and it was getting late; I couldn’t just suddenly come to caturaṣram and play full-cycles, half cycles—it wouldn’t look nice. So I started it in khaṇḍam itself.

DN: But this is a very uncommon transition. (plays tape to 18:23)

RR: Something wrong there—I missed somewhere. I managed; that’s all.

DN: (plays the tape, stops at 20:00)

RR: There, I have come to caturaṣram. (listens to next gaṭam turn) He could have come to caturaṣram there; he didn’t (laughs—listens further, stops 21:10) This is the pattern I got from that bhajana player

\[ ta \quad - \quad din \quad - \quad din \quad - \quad din \quad - \quad ta \]

(they listen to rest of tani together)

DN: That last kūrvai, is that your own?

RR: No.

DN: It sounds more like the Tanjore Vaidyanatha Iyer style.

RR: It is my teacher’s. See, he has just spaced that phrase differently
DN: All the way down... (eight, six, four, three, two, one)

RR: Two speeds, yes.

See, they were all great people—they have done so much—I just opened my eyes, kept my heart open; other than that, what do you know? The art of mṛdaṅgam playing was—people used to say, before that mṛdaṅgam was not developed much. In fact, if the song started after six, they would play the tani āvartanam for sama. Even to that extent it wasn't developed. But after my teacher, it has developed like anything. You can do whatever you want.
DN: Everybody says it was your teacher that transformed the whole thing.

RR: Before—we have not heard before—but he had a solution for everything. Any problem, he had an immediate solution.

Such greatness—see, now man has captured space, has landed on the moon. But he didn’t land on it all on his own; there had been all the initial preparation, starting with Professor Einstein. Nowadays we have all the latest things for calculation, computers and everything; in those days they didn’t have any computers—those days were more difficult. Now they have been able to build up on what these people have established. But develop on what? That’s always the question.

My mind goes immediately to what he did in a given situation; like a model. “What did he do? Okay, I will do that.” Some concerts I can never forget; they’re still fresh in my mind—I can still see him. Doing something on the spur of the moment—that flash—you have to hear it to believe it. I’m happy just to have had the opportunity to listen to him, knowing what he was doing, what was the meaning, what was behind it. Without knowing what he was doing, it’s no use.

Whatever I have experienced, I just want to share with you. They were all such great people, and not only in mṛdaṅgam playing, but in everything. See, whenever he went to somebody else’s concert—if he came to hear me, he never expected them to come to his level of playing; he just wanted me to play well. He came to my level.

I remember one concert, I missed two mātras—in those days, failing was not something I worried about. If I started any kōrvaį, I will arrive. I never failed. Also, I had an ability, that if somebody told me some idea, they only had to tell me once; I would play it immediately in the concert. I never thought about whether I could play it.

Once somebody told me a kōrvaį which you couldn’t just start; there was a big building-up for that, and the kōrvaį comes as an extension of that
building-up, and then it begins in some odd place, and you play it three
times, and it never lands on sama until the end. Funny körvai, very
complicated. On that day I had a concert at the Music Academy, and they
gave me the tani in ādi tālā, with the eqüppu one-quarter beat after the
eighth beat. See, anything after the sama is common, but before is
uncommon. It’s only one-quarter after, and that is not complicated, but
something is uncommon.

So, I started, blindly, and my teacher had come to that concert, and all these
musicians had come, and I started this thing. You have to play it three times,
and the third time through I had the feeling I was missing two mātras. So I
just added two in between; in a waste. I had this subconscious feeling that I
was missing two mātras, so I just added them in between and arrived at the
correct point.

I was staying with my teacher; after the concert I didn’t want to see him. I was
feeling awful. It turned out that he had been sitting next to the Alathur
Brothers at the concert, and when he heard me do that, he said to them,
“This fellow will succeed in life.” (laughter) But I was feeling awful; I thought,
‘Never have I failed; why did I have to pick today to do such a thing?’ Even
after dinner I didn’t see him, but the Alathur Brothers came looking for me. I
was avoiding them.

They asked me about it, and I said, “Come on, don’t kill me, I’m already
dead. I’m already suffering a lot.” They said, “Oh, no, do you know what he
said? He said he didn’t mind your slipping; if you hadn’t realized your slip
and exposed yourself to the public, he would have felt that way. But you
should appreciate what you were able to do! How many people would have
known it? Just him, and us, and a couple of others. Failure is human, and
that is the type of körvai you are likely to miss; it’s something new.”

Another time, they gave a solo in khanḍa āpu tālā, and quite fast. That day
there was gaṭam accompaniment. If I were playing alone, I could just have
gone on, but I had to play bit by bit. Also, that fellow’s kālapramanam was
not steady, and it was not blending well, so I was not happy. And he was at
that concert, and the next day he came to my house. I was still unhappy about the concert, and I didn't say anything, but he saw my mind, and said, "What's wrong? You don't seem to be well today. Is it because of yesterday's concert? Come on, what more could you have done? If you had played beautifully, today fifty percent of the people will remember how you played, and tomorrow twenty-five percent; you must learn to welcome forgetfulness. Don't think about it." I was simply shocked; I hadn't wanted to see him at all, because I felt awful. I could have played much better; it should have come off that day when he had come. He simply converted me; my spirits.

I could talk so much about them, their mutual admiration, their encouragement of artists. Personally they might have differences, but on the platform it was combined; a team effort.

And unlike college and all that, this is entirely different. That guru should feel something for you; you should enter his mind. If he feels, 'this is a good disciple; he should be happy', he will be happy. I have seen many instances. And in those days we didn't have the feeling we would be playing concerts, or that we would take this as a profession. In my case, I also had a college education, and the whole time I was going to school I was practicing, and automatically the concerts came. Nowadays you don't see that type of dedication. After six months they want to play on TV, go to the States, go to this festival, that festival, they catch hold of people, you know; this is not a healthy thing. It needs time for you to mature enough. See, you teach

ta - din - din - na -

and you play, and the student plays, is it the same? It's different! The matter is the same, but the way it's played is different. It takes patience; if you stick with it, automatically it will come. Those people who have trained you know that you are bound to come. That faith was there.

See, there was a marriage in my village, and that man had only one daughter, so he got money. And if a money man is there, there will be people
around him. They told him he had to have the best concert, so they got Aryakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, Palghat Mani Iyer—marriage was over, and they always have a postmortem, get together and talk about how everything had gone. And the man whose daughter had been married said, “See, he sang one kṛti, Rāmanannubrovara. I have heard my daughter being taught the same song by the tuition teacher. The words are the same. Why did I have to pay so much money?” (laughs) See, there are people like that, too. So, that

ta - din - din - na -

is the same.

DN: It's the application.

RR: The application, the maturity, the fullness. Whatever little you do, everything should have a fullness. It doesn't come all of a sudden, however you practice. It takes time. Go on repeating the same thing, again and again, until it comes under your control so that nothing can shake you from it. That is what we call sādhanai—achievement. But for us it means also repeating again and again, so that you get that fullness—that life.

na - din - din - na -

has a life. That life you will be able to bring out only with maturity and practice.
PLEASE NOTE:

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Filmed as received.
TRICHY S. SANKARAN
SECOND INTERVIEW: MARCH 17, 1991

DN: Here we are—this is the second one. The picture that started this video out was the picture you talked about in the first interview. It's your arangetram.
So you're there, and your teacher is there, and the singer was...

Violin, Lalguđi G Jayaraman, my guru, and also you may see in that picture the father of Alathur Subba Iyer, sitting right below my guru. His name was Alathur Venkatesa Iyer. This was taken in the year 1955 in the Nandodayan Pillayar Koil in Trichy.

DN: But today we're here at your house in Toronto, and we're going to discuss this soio that you played. We'll start the tape, and when there are things I want to ask about, or things that you want to talk about, we'll stop the tape and talk.

SS: Sure.

DN: (starts tape, stops on mōrā, 1:05) I'd like to stop for a second and talk about that. It's a mōrā.

SS: That's right.

DN: It's introduced by a figure that you start at the end of one of the cycles. Would you be kind enough to recite that? I'd really rather have it in your syllables.

SS: Well, the way it goes is,
It's a nine-aksara mōrā.

DN: Is it safe in your way of thinking to call it a śaṅkīṁa jāti mōrā?

SS: Normally I don't apply that term when I am playing a nine-aksara mōrā, or an eighteen-aksara mōrā. To me, I think jāti has a distinct connotation. In some ways I would relate that if I play śaṅkīṁa naḍai. It's a nine-aksara mōrā. Probably from the fact that it's a nine-aksara mōrā, you tend to think it's śaṅkīṁa jāti. No. To me, the total number of aksaras do not really convey the jāti idea. To me a jāti is when I use a distinct pattern, like
ta ka di ku ta di ki ta tom
ta ka di ku ta di ki ta tom

That's a śaṅkīṭa jāti pattern, I would say.

DN: I see, but it doesn't apply to larger structures.

SS: No.

DN: So when you talk about those things, you just talk about the number of beats.

SS: The number of akṣaras, yes. It may be a nine-akṣara mōrā, or a thirteen-and-a-half-akṣara mōrā, and even though you may say it's divisible by four-and-a-half, or nine, to me it has a distinct character when I apply the term jāti or gati.

DN: Okay, but underneath it, if you're thinking a nine-akṣara mōrā, that suggests to you a lot of possible applications, right?

SS: Yeah, it has all kinds of possibilities—a whole realm of ramifications. But in this case I keep the mōrās really distinct, and it has a total length. In my mind. The way I have analyzed things, the jāti application has a special purpose, the way I would apply the term.

DN: It reflects something that happens just at the phrase level.

SS: At the phrase level, and people sometimes talk about jāti and its relation to gati—even there I would like to keep them somewhat distinct. Even when I do the śaṅkīṭa gati, the śaṅkīṭa naḍai, I simply say śaṅkīṭa naḍai. I refrain from using the term śaṅkīṭa jāti. Because jāti has more than one use. In the study of tāḷa, the term is applied to the variants of the laghu. Another area you might be interested in looking at is jati and jāti. Oftentimes the jatis, which have the characteristic pattern of seven, or nine, or three, or
four, or five—again, the same name is applied—caturaśra, and so on. The jātī pattern is there, in which we have also included the jātī patterns.

DN: Which are the phrases.

SS: The phrases, exactly. ‘Jātī’ simply refers to phrase. So as far as this mōrā is concerned, I would simply say it’s a nine-akṣara mōrā.

DN: It strikes me that the purpose of this is that, for the first time, you draw attention to the c Duffy. Before that, the phrases are all starting and ending with the beginning of...

SS: With the beginning of the tāla. The idea here is, the drummer has the function to outline the tāla, to carry the tāla in his playing. The Duffy becomes a focal point—an important target—and the mōrās and kōrvais are directed to land on the Duffy. In other words, I have a specific Duffy following the kṛtī—Kalgiyuntegada, in this case, which is arai idām—it is there. But when I play my patterns, I am not necessarily thinking all the time of the arai idām. This is important for my manodharma. When I play my patterns, I improvise, and I just want to travel through my solo. These are the targeted stations. The Duffys become the focal point, and whenever and wherever I play my mōrās and kōrvais—of course, I don’t just immediately play the kōrvais—later on we will come to that, because I develop certain motifs before playing kōrvais—just before taking the kōrvai I think of the Duffy so that I land at the appropriate place.

DN: It sort of sets up a level of attention—not tension, but attention.

SS: Sure. That’s the right way of saying it.

DN: Let’s go on. (plays tape, stops at 2:45) Well, obviously I want to stop and talk about that one. That’s the first kōrvai in this tani, and you’re aware that I think about three aspects of any composition like this, and one of those is the preparation—how you prepared it, the way you introduced the phrases. The way the kōrvai is structured, it has an introductory section that reduces in stages, and you played every stage of that in the preparation. But the
structure of it is very interesting, because you incorporate several structural ideas, some of them very old, and some of them very modern. Now you said this one is yours.

SS: Yes, this körvai is one of my compositions—each körvai I call a composition, even a mörä. It's quite right to say I show the preparation for the körvai. In other words, I indicated the motifs. In general I follow this way of presenting material in my playing, and I believe this is one of the things I am known for—you know, when people talk about 'the style of so-and-so.' As you mentioned, it's very clearly laid out:

\[ \text{ta - di - ta län - gu ki ţa ta ka ta ri ki ţa tom -} \]
\[ \text{ta di - ki ţa tom ta} \]

that's the main phrase there. And then

\[ \text{di - ta län - gu ki ţa ta ka ta ri ki ţa tom -} \]

is the reduction. And then

\[ \text{ta län - gu ki ţa ta ka ta ri ki ţa tom -} \]

but I am adding

\[ \text{ta dîn - gi ţa tom} \]

These are the two motivic figures there. This way I make it very clear what my intention is going to be. In some concerts I might have played the phrase and just ended with a mörä rather than a körvai—this I consider a körvai. So there's a clear indication showing the reduction pattern, the gopucca yati, and then within the körvai is a trikālam of 'ta dîn - gi ţa tom', and then in the very end you have the
that's the mōrā. So a kōrvai can include a mōrā in its structure. So that's what I did in that case.

DN: One of the interesting things about it to me is that I've run into several kōrvais that start with an antecedent phrase like your

\[
\text{ta - di - ta lān - gu ki ŭa ta ka ta ri ki ŭa tom -}
\]

and they might go

\[
\text{ta - di - ta lān - gu ki ŭa ta ka ta ri ki ŭa tom -}
\]
\[
\text{di - ta lān - gu ki ŭa ta ka ta ri ki ŭa tom -}
\]
\[
\text{ta lān - gu ki ŭa ta ka ta ri ki ŭa tom -}
\]

and then the trikālam. What you've done here is re-arrange it...

SS: String it through, right.

DN: And so you've turned it into one thorough design, rather than two things kind of butted together. The other thing I wanted to ask you about in this one, is the mōrā. I'm using the term 'unfolding' for this type. You have a phrase repeated once, then twice, then three times, and the third one is a small mōrā of its own.
SS: A mōrā of its own, and not only that, you also see a little bit of srotovaḥa yati. The beauty of the whole piece is that its overall shape is in the pattern of reducing, if you're looking at the geometric shape—within that, are also numerous other shapes—one of those is this

\[
\begin{align*}
  & \text{ta din - gi ṇa tom} \\
  & \text{ta -} \\
  & \text{ta din - gi ṇa tom} \\
  & \text{ta din - gi ṇa tom} \\
  & \text{ta -} \\
  & \text{ta din - gi ṇa tom} \\
  & \text{ta din - gi ṇa tom} \\
  & \text{ta din - gi ṇa tom}
\end{align*}
\]

so this kind of slight increase each time is part of that.

DN: Not everybody uses that type of increase...

SS: Not everybody. I don't recall this even in my master's compositions. There may be—I have to think about it. If I come across that I can let you know. This körvaï, if my memory serves right, I have been using in the late sixties and early seventies. Maybe a bit later—I can't give you an exact date.

DN: This particular one? So it dates back twenty years or more.

SS: When you ask if it's a recent idea, I don't think so, but at least it occurred to me at that time.

DN: One more thing that's going to come up later, and I just want to plant the seed now. In a case like this, when it's eḍuppū-to-eḍuppu, you always have the choice of doing it once or three times.

SS: That's right.

DN: What goes into that decision?
SS: There are two considerations. Following the norm of playing three times, and another consideration is for the sake of effectiveness.

DN: So it's an aesthetic thing.

SS: That's quite true. Also, it's a matter of making the material understandable. If you do the same thing three times, it's easier for the knowledgeable listener to pick it up—to learn something even on the stage.

DN: So if it's special to you, if you really like something, you might do it three times to give people a chance to get it.

SS: It's not necessarily in the back of my mind. I'm saying these are all the possibilities which could be looked at. But three has stayed as a magic number, in the creation of mōrā, or in doing the kōrvai three times. I have occasionally played a kōrvai only once, depending upon what comes after, how ideas are rushing through my brain—it has to do with that.

DN: In a way, it's an unfair question, because you're in a state where you're making something, and to ask why you made that instead of something else—in a way it's a dumb question, but I'm interested in your responses. Shall we go on? (plays tape, stops at arudi) I just want to point out that this was the second cēppu-targeted composition so far, and you played arudis for both of them. You don't miss many of those, do you?

SS: No, I don't, because to me it's part of the structure. The arudi point is derived from the melodic theme, and this arudi also plays an important role in the Ragam-Tanam-Pallavi genre. The cēppu is important, but this coming in at the fifth beat is equally important. For the arudi I would also use the same material. In other words, I would make my ideas really clear, you have heard all the development, you have heard the kōrvai, I have landed at the cēppu, and I am coming back now to the arudi, the fifth beat, and I will use the same phrase:
So that's how it works. In other words, it's highly structured.

DN: Right It's related to the song structure, but as you said before you're carrying the tāḷa, and the composed part is a temporary sort of moving up into another level of attention that's resolved when you come back to eḻuppu, but when you come back to the arudi, you're not just reflecting the song structure, you're moving deeply back into the tāḷa.

SS: And if I may add, the arudi is much more improvised than the kōrvais. It's just on the spur of the moment, following the eḻuppu.

DN: (plays tape, stops at 4:42) You know I'm going to ask you about this one. This is a very famous composition of your master's. I'm very interested—is there a name for this composition? You wouldn't call it a kōrvai...

SS: No, it isn't a kōrvai. We haven't come up with lots of names for the pieces. Surely it was my master who created this. As soon as we say that phrase,

tam - - - ta ka din - din - din - na

we know what we are talking about. This often occurs in the introductory stage of the mṛdaṅgam solo. My master introduced this, and as you said it has really become famous, and many drummers follow this. If you notice, there is a well-laid theme, ending with a mōrā. It's part of a flow pattern,

ta - din - din - na -
but it has a nice design to it. It is generally played in tiśraṁ. Again, it was my master who played it in khaṇḍam also.

DN: He didn’t just do that whenever he felt like it, did he? One trademark of his approach was to take a composition like this, that’s built entirely on fours, and if he’s going to play it in khaṇḍam, it’s going to be very difficult for the tāḷa-keeper. Was he more likely to do something like this if the tāḷa-keeping was really strong? Or would he just do it when he felt like it? Or are they connected in some way?

SS: Two things are important. First, he would know the capability of the main performer, and also, depending upon his mood on that day. Generally he would play in caturaśra and tiśra, but I heard him play the khaṇḍa on several occasions, both in duos with him, and also in his own concerts. I just want to elaborate on that. Khaṇḍa naḍai was his most favorite naḍai. He has shown enormous variety in tiśra naḍai as well, and for that matter miśra naḍai also, so it’s kind of hard to say which one, but he introduced certain new designs, or forms, in khaṇḍa naḍai. I’ll point them out later, when we get to that. In this case, I have seen musicians in the audience raising their eyebrows and trying very hard to follow this, because it is hard.

DN: Unless you’re extremely alert, you might think it’s tiśraṁ, but dragging.

SS: Right, they might think it’s something else. It’s like walking on a rope or something—it’s that close between khaṇḍam and tiśraṁ. And to be able to do it in the slow speed, at each and every point you have to be really alert, because everything is in groups of four. It never changes.

DN: And it leads to something else that’s on my mind a lot in this music, and that is the strange circumstance that you as a master drummer and the student of a master drummer sit home and cook up all this stuff, and then, when you go to play it on the stage, part of what goes into whether it’s effective or not, is the ability of another person, who doesn’t know the material, to keep the tāḷa steady. In some ways this is a very perplexing phenomenon in the music. I
don't know of any other music where it's somebody else's responsibility to keep the beat.

SS: You're raising an important point here. To my knowledge, the musicians my guru played with were all stalwarts. So he really knew their capacity. Most of them would try to follow as he was playing. Some musicians were even more capable of keeping tāḷa with some understanding. That's also really important.

DN: And you have to have somebody doing it who likes drumming. This was on my mind when I went to Madras to do the project there. I needed a musician who was going to bring the music to a certain level so that the people would feel like playing, and at the same time have a strength of lāya strong enough so that they could do some of the things they wanted to do. There are not too many of those people.

SS: It just goes to show the mastery of the artist, the command of the material, the way he could handle it. As you said, the main artist may not thoroughly understand what was going on, but still, as long as he keeps his tāḷa with the proper lāya the master will be able to match it.

DN: What it means is that the tani āvartanam is in one way an ensemble piece. It's a solo, but it requires that other person.

SS: Yes, because you need to hear the solo in relation to the tāḷa. Otherwise, it loses its gravity.

DN: Right, it loses meaning.

SS: Just a simple example—without tāḷa:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ta} & \, \text{ki} \, \text{ta} \, \text{ta} \, \text{ka} \, \text{di} \, \text{mi} \, \text{ta} \, \text{ka} \, \text{di} \, \text{mi} \, \text{ta} \\
& \, \text{ka} \, \text{di} \, \text{mi} \, \text{ta} \, \text{ka} \, \text{di} \, \text{mi} \, \text{ta} \, \text{ka} \, \text{ta} \, \text{ki} \, \text{ta} \, \text{[ta]}
\end{align*}
\]

with tāḷa,
ta ki ta ta lka di mi ta lka di mi ta lka di mi
   ta lka di mi ta lka di mi ta lka di mi ta lka ta ki ta [ta]

How do you get that pull? So the beats are really important, especially when we play some of these cross-rhythmic patterns.

DN: (plays tape, stops at 5:01, at SS' request)

SS: Just stop for a second. I just wanted to say...probably you have read my book, *The Art of Drumming*. In that I try to describe the different stages of a *mṛdaṅga* solo. This is the second stage.

DN: I was going to say that this is transitional. You haven't yet started accenting anything else...

SS: No, but this is

   ta - din - ta - din -

I have finished

   ta - din - din - na -

and all the other things I played there, including the *körvai* and

   tam - - - ta ka din - din - din - na

I consider this as a structural point. This is going into the second stage.

DN: I have it as the beginning of the madhyama kāla section.

SS: It starts in *vilamba* kāla and gradually gets into madhyama kāla.

DN: (plays tape, stops at 6:18) That little mōrā comes out of the preceding material so seamlessly that it's hard to hear exactly where it begins. Besides
that, the kārvais are very densely articulated. Where would you say the actual mōrā begins?

SS: Well, it's an eight-akṣara mōrā

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ldin tan} & \quad \text{ktk} \\
\text{ldin tan} & \quad \text{ktk tom tamek}
\end{align*}
\]

In structuring my solo, I use a lot of solkaṭṭu—flow patterns. To me, the mōrās are offsprings—as I said, I just include that, and end (a particular pattern). Sometimes I play a solo, and don't include any kōrvai—just in the end, after the periya mōrā. So here, my main idea was to concentrate on the mīṭu and produce what I call the vallinum-mellinum—these are the dynamics I introduce.

DN: Explain what those terms mean.

SS: Sure, vallinum is the bold structures, and mellinum is softness. Normally I like to bring such dynamics into my playing, with regard to this type of pattern. It may emerge with a different intensity, a different density, in other cases. So these mīṭu patterns, and then the off-beat rhythms.

DN: Well, it's an off-beat rhythm, but the pattern still starts with the beats right? The accents sound off-beat, but do they feel off-beat to you?

SS: It does. The whole purpose is, I really want to create this rhythmic tension, within which you hear those little motifs, like

\[
\text{tom k t t k}
\]
which kind of pinches off that beat, and returns to sama, or following eḍuppu also. So it’s on the beat and off the beat. It’s primarily mīṭu sollu, and I use the term vallinum-mellinum.

DN: (plays tape, stops at 7:10) I just want to point that out. You shift the accent over a half-beat, to the eḍuppu, and you play as if each beat had an eḍuppu. Did your teacher do that?

SS: Yes, he did. Also, the way it gets to the eḍuppu point of the tāḷa is unrecognizable.

DN: That’s exactly right. It’s very slippery. How did you do that, by the way? (laughter)

SS: Well, maybe I should keep just one or two things to myself, right?

DN: Fair enough. (plays tape, stops at 7:57) This is the one I gave the name ‘enfolded’ körvai to. This is again your teacher’s, right?

SS: Yes, this is another famous körvai of my master. We played this körvai in the late fifties in many of our duo concerts, and I’ve heard him separately too, on many occasions. That

\[ \text{ta din - gu} \]

was a favorite phrase. It was a really beautiful sound, the way he played it.

DN: We started to talk about that yesterday, that the use of that phrase is special to your school. Where I would say that

\[ \text{ta din gi ṇa tom} \]

is sort of the base mōrā in some of the other styles. Not that you don’t use that one, but you use this one, too, and there’s a difference—a difference in ‘feel’.
SS: Difference in feel, and also, I suppose, a difference in approach in using the phrase. I'm looking at it only as a phrase—not even relating it to 'ta din gi na tom'. Just the phrase

ta ka ta din - gu ta din - gu ta din - gu ta -
ta - di - na - ta - na - di - na -
ta - na - ta - di - na - tam - ki ta ta ka

and so on. So this is really a beautiful körvai, within which you can see there are smaller types—the reductions, and then in the end,

ta din - gu tom - - - ta - - -
ta din - gu tom - - - ta - - -
ta din - gu tom -
    ta - - - - - -
    din - - - - - -
ta din - gu tom - - - ta - - -
ta din - gu tom - - - ta - - -
ta din - gu tom -
    ta - - - - - -
    din - - - - - -
ta din - gu tom - - - ta - - -
ta din - gu tom - - - ta - - -
ta din - gu tom - [ta]

DN: And again you finish this one with an arudi that uses the same material.

SS: Same material
Because I find certain aesthetics in that—I have followed the körvai through, and I have ended at the eduppu, and it's really nice to use the same phrase to get to the arudi. In fact, if I may just follow that line of thought, my master also played similar körvais, but changing certain kārvais, for misra cāpu tāla and for khanḍa cāpu tāla. Certainly it has the stamp of my guru, Śrī Palani.

DN: Now this one you play just once, at the ended of that shifted section.

SS: Right, following the eduppu, or the middle of every aksara.

DN: Okay, let's go on. (plays tape, stops at 8:29) I want to stop there and talk about that transition. That's a revered thing your teacher came up with that has really entered the mainstream. Everybody uses that now, often with respect and reverence, and sometimes they take a long time going back and forth between the two gatis before they really settle in khanḍa.

SS: This again shows how important the flow patterns are. For any naḍai change, I see a certain aesthetic beauty in following that pattern, and then making a subtle entry. This is how my master played, and it's a wonderful device. According to the stories I have heard, up until then, when the drummers wanted to play khanḍa gati, they would just go

lta - ta ki ṭa lta ka ta ki ṭa ljo nu ta ki ṭa lta ka ta ki ṭa
But this pattern of introducing a gati as part of a flow pattern was a typical creation of my guru.

DN: So it was sort of a new thing. The other thing that's interesting about it is that it's a kind of inversion of the treatment of the longer composition you did before, where you left the phrases at four, and shifted the gati so that it was difficult to keep the taala with it. This is almost the reverse.

SS: Okay, I get you.

DN: In that one he keeps the phrases in tension with the taala structure, but in this one he changes the phrase so that it's very comfortable with the taala.

SS: It's a very subtle way of doing it.

DN: He wasn't just stuck with one idea. This one prepares the way so nicely for the change. A lot of times people will use a korvai or something that shifts gatis in order to make that change, but with this you don't need it.

SS: But sometimes he would also right away start the khanda nada. Of course the way I nuance is also a matter of personal style, derived from the main source, my master, and then you will always find personal nuances entering the stream. This marks the individual style.

DN: Let's go on. (plays tape, stops at 8:45)

SS: These are all my own ideas, according to my manodharma.

DN: Right, you interrupt it, but you finish it later. (plays tape, stops at 9:58) That whole section sounded to me as if you started off with his idea...

SS: Right, then I got into my idea, which was extemporization.

DN: And then back into that, back into some of your own things, and then back to the thing you had started, but in an elaborated form. Another thing is, there
are passages in there of extremely fast fingerings I don’t think I’ve heard anybody else do. I wonder if those are things that are original to you.

SS: Yes. Those are mine—only mīṭu sollū. It’s extremely hard to play, because that speed is ten per beat. I like certain nuancing with the mīṭu sollū, and also creating certain dynamics with that. As I said, I try to travel at all levels with these patterns before I resolve with a mōrā or a kōrvai. I don’t think you or I have heard anybody else playing this kind of thing in this context.

DN: The particular kind of fingerin going on there, I just haven’t heard anybody else do it. I thought it was probably your own. (plays tape, stops at 11:58) Okay, that’s the end of the khanḍa gati section. I have several questions about this one. Is this composition your teacher’s?

SS: No, it’s mine.

DN: It’s your own?

SS: Maybe another drummer has used some similar phrases or something. Have you come across this before?

DN: Yes, as a matter of fact I did.

SS: Well, my master definitely did not use this one—this particular design.

DN: The way the reduction happens, it’s a phrase-based reduction, not an arithmetically based reduction, although the whole thing comes out just fine. You start out removing things from the end of the phrase:

ta - ta ki ta ta ka tom - ta tom - ta - tam - - - -

and then

ta - ta ki ta ta ka tom - ta tom - ta -

then
ta - ta ki ta ta ka tom - ta

then

ta - ta ki ta

then you take it off the beginning

ta ki ta ta ki ta

Up to there I really understand the aesthetic logic of it. What I want to ask is, what is that

ta - - di - - tam - -

doing in there? I'm not saying it's wrong, but you composed this, so I can ask you.

SS: Well, I consider that as a connector. It connects with the ideas I have been using up until then. And then what follows, for me the interest in creating this piece, to show the

ta din gi nə tom

coming at different places, and then the last time occurring on the beat, which is kind of a nice resolution—a relief, which also emphasizes the fact that I have been doing this piece in khanḍa gati. So there are two sets of patterns here. One is the phrase idea, the reduction on that one. And then the

ta din gi nə tom

occurring three times—like a three-fold ‘ta din gi nə tom’
DN: It's what I call a compound móră.

SS: It goes:

Ita - ta ki ṭa ita ka toŋ - ta ṭom - ta - toŋ l- - - -
Ita ka ta ki ṭa ita ka toŋ - ta ṭom - ta - toŋ l- - - -

Ita - ta ki ṭa ita ka toŋ - ta ṭom - ta -
ta ṭa ka ta ki ṭa ita ka toŋ - ta ṭom l- ta -

ta - ṭa ki ṭa ta ka ṭom - ta
ta ka ṭa ki ṭa ta ka ṭom - ta

ta - ṭa ki ṭa
ta ka ṭa ki ṭa

ta ki ṭa ta ki ṭa
ta l- di - ñu - ñu -

ta din ɡi ṭa toŋ
ta din ɡi ṭa toŋ
ta din ɡi ṭa toŋ -
ta din ɡi ṭa toŋ

ta din ɡi ṭa toŋ
ta din ɡi ṭa toŋ
ta din ɡi ṭa toŋ -

Ita din ɡi ṭa toŋ
Ita din ɡi ṭa toŋ
Ita din ɡi ṭa toŋ
DN: So you used a sama yati mōrā exactly because of the way it works with the beat.

SS: Exactly, that's right. That intricate relationship that you hear, that cross-rhythmical tension, is really beautiful there. That's one of the aesthetics, I would say, aside from the fact that it's a reduction from the main phrase.

DN: In composing something like this, does it just jump into your mind fully-formed, or do you play around with it for a while first?

SS: Okay, I'll tell you the circumstances which led to the creation of this piece. During my practice, when I was working on some ideas in khaṇḍa gati—I just let the playing take place first—not that I sit with a notebook or pencil, or even sit with the drum, 'I'm going to think of a composition', or anything like that. I just wanted the playing to take place. In the stream of my playing, I'm sure I was just touching upon this idea.

\la - \ta - \ta \ka \tom - \ta \ldin - \ta - \tam \to - - - -

This is another interesting way of introducing khaṇḍa gati, this

\ldin - \ta - \tam \to - \tam - -

this four and six. It's a bit unusual. In my master's playing you have heard \tam - - \tam - \tam - \tam - \ta

three and seven. Here, I call this four and six, which I also elaborated before embarking upon this kōrvai. That's totally improvisation, ending with a mōrā. In other words, in my style of playing I try to create certain effect. I don't know how else I can describe that. And then, in the back of my mind I had this composition to play. It's not that I suddenly thought of that kōrvai—I have played it on many occasions. I'm sure I might also have heard this
phrase before in someone else's playing. But in terms of structuring this way, I believe it's my own.

DN: In terms of the preparation for it, it sounded to me as if you focused on certain phrases within it to use in that elaboration. But that 's not set up ahead of time.

SS: No. These are the places, I would say, that are most often improvised—most often nuanced. Because the way I am going to play I really wouldn't know. But what I would certainly know is, I want to play this piece. So it's preparatory work, but this preparation could take any form, or create any type of impression. That's kind of unpredictable. You know, going deeper into the analysis of this piece, it's possible I might have heard these phrases in Sri Palghat Mani Iyer's playing. But again, the whole arrangement into a new piece happens to be mine.

DN: And you do it three times. It's at a main structural point, because you're leaving khanḍa gati. Are you more likely to do something three times at a main structural point?

SS: Not necessarily. As a drummer, when I start my tani I try to be in proportion with the duration of the main concert. Generally, my solos tend to be around eighteen to twenty minutes, something like that. And when I start out, I don't really think about khanḍa gati or tisra gati—I just want to let things happen. I might have a certain interest, like 'Oh, it would be nice to play some khanḍa gati today', or that morning or the previous night I might be thinking of some ideas—it depends on the circumstances.

So at that point, I may have even had the hesitation in my mind—if I recall right, I had a vague sense of the total length of the solo—whether to get into a different nādi, or do a few more things in khanḍa gati. But that point seemed like a high resolute point, a strong point to make an exit.

DN: The door showed itself to you, in a way. I have to use words and ideas here, but I understand that you're not planning something and then
executing it. The stuff presents itself to you in the moment, and you respond to that.

SS: Sometimes I might also be carrying a sense of what I have done up to that point in khaṇḍa gati and then think, 'Okay, that's enough', and move on to the next naḍai, or if I'm feeling some time constraint, just move on to the paran section and end the solo.

DN: That could take place right in this moment. So these are important points.

Let's go on (plays tape, stops at 13:08) That type of fingering is your own...

SS: That's part of what you might call the newer things. I was kind of alluding to an idea of my first teacher, Sri P.A. Venkataraman. I would say it has a certain bearing on listening to tabla. I wanted to comment because people might miss it. It goes by so quick, and it's in the transition between two naḍais, and they might think it's just another sarvalaghū pattern, or another flow pattern at the double tempo. Some of the fingering I'm using is peculiar to my own playing. Especially in this country, where I am featured as a soloist, not necessarily in the South Indian musical context, I introduce many of these nuances. This has a certain affinity to the tabla style of playing, but on the valandalai—not just the gumīki. Most often people focus on the left hand—the bayan—but in this case it's the valandalai—to show the beauty of the tonal quality.

DN: And then you do that stark change to tiśram...

SS: And also I ended in a softer way, and then beginning it with that dynamic intro.

DN: This whole dynamic thing...you must be aware that in India nobody else does that. Did your teacher do it?

SS: No, not in this way, but still the imprints were there.
DN: Have you considered that your doing it might be an effect of living over here for so long? The type of dynamics you use—our music uses them in a very similar way, and Indian music in general doesn't do it.

SS: I'm glad you asked that. Sure.

DN: Was it something conscious?

SS: Well, it was there in my playing even back in the sixties. If you look at some of the press reviews, or what was generally talked over, people used to say 'the verve with which you play'. They noticed certain colors in my playing—the shading—but I think I have added even more dimensions to that thought after coming here. One of the things that captivated me in listening to Western classical music, or even some of the more contemporary works, was the range of dynamics that they carried through in their pieces. Not only that, when I got into composing pieces, like some of the gamelan pieces, even there, as a composer I wanted to see these things happen. So it's fair to say that this culture has influenced me to get into more of the shading, and bring in a whole range of dynamics.

DN: What about in terms of overall form?

SS: I would say it has been there, sure. No question there at all.

DN: Because your structures are so clean.

SS: Very clear-cut ideas, and very clearly laid structures; that is true. I remember I wrote a description of the mrđaŋgam solo, a chapter on that, even then I talked about the structuring of a solo, in the seventies. Unquestionably, this form existed; not necessarily an influence coming from this culture.

DN: Although the talking about it is probably something you began here, and that will influence your overall sense of form.
SS: It's possible. Because as early as 1975, when I was asked to give a lecture on the description of the solo—let alone verbalizing about each and every stage of the solo, you know that people normally can't describe anything. They are not used to it.

DN: But their sense of form may be very beautiful.

SS: Surely that opened up many things for me as to verbalizing, and to clearly see what kind of form exists within a drum solo. I think that helped me understand my own style, and also understand other styles of playing. One thing that's been in the back of my mind all the years, is how Indian musicians have learned to work in a very cohesive and logistic way. The way the körvaïs are structured, thought out, be it mathematical permutation or phrase reduction, whatever. There's a wonderful cohesiveness about this. We are really known for that kind of logical mind—logical thinking.

DN: Let's get into the tiśram section. (plays tape, stops at 14:29) Okay, I want to talk about that. I can analyze that as a körvaï. Do you call it a körvaï?

SS: No. There is a körvaï, but this is part of the preparation. I just ended with a mörä. I just carried that phrase:

\[ \text{ta - ta - ta ri ta ka jo nu tam - -} \]

this phrase comes from my master's source. In fact there is a reduction körvaï, which I did not get into that day. I just played
lt - ta - ta ri lta ka jo ṇu tam -
lt - ta - ta ri lta ka jo ṇu tam -
lt a ka ta - ta ri lta ka jo ṇu tam -
l- - ta - ta ri lta ka jo ṇu tam -
l r g d ta - ta ri lta ka jo ṇu tam -
l- - ta - ta ri lta ka jo ṇu tam -
ltam - - di ta ka ljo ṇu
ltam - - di lta ka jo ṇu
ltam - l- di ta ka jo ṇu [ta]

that's the mōrā

DN: It is a mōrā, but it's cadentially relatively weak. It's like three sarvalaghu figures strung together, and it's in tiṣra so there's some design effect...

SS: But I wouldn't call it a körvai. It so happened, the way it aligned, but my intention was just to play those caturaśra phrases

tam - - di ta ka jo nu
tam - - di ta ka jo nu
tam - - di ta ka jo nu [ta]

against the tiṣra gati. That was the idea there.

DN: (plays tape, stops at 16:00) That preparation is so beautiful. Is it again something spontaneous?

SS: Spontaneous, and I want to tell you something else there. That
ta - ta - ta ri ta ka jo ṭu tam -
- - ta - ta ri ta ka jo ṭu tam -

as a block, comes from my master. What I have done as a kōrvai and the
extemporization, this is my own extension. This is an extension of that idea,
but it's made into my own, and all that nuancing was mostly impromptu.

DN: I wondered about that. You've got this block set up over here, and then this
other area...

SS: Where I can freely travel with the material and come back.

DN: Is the kōrvai your own?

SS: Yes.

DN: It's an interesting mixture. Most of it is arithmetical reduction, until that one
stage,

dī na - din - gu
   din - gu

All the other stages have dropped two, and that one drops three.

SS: That's right, following the phrase shape. It's a mixture of arithmetic
combined with the phrase shape. That's the aesthetic I see there.

DN: You couldn't have done anything else without hurting it.

SS: It's possible. I could have stopped after

dī na - din - gu
and come up with something else, but I prefer it this way. There's a kind of completion to it. Aesthetics is really a wonderful term, because it's applicable to various things, and also subject to many interpretations.

DN: Fortunately, the world is big enough for all of them.

SS: When you look at the beauty of the körvaïs, I think it carries certain aesthetics like this, like a logical order of reducing, and then all of a sudden taking a twist and following the phrase shape.

DN: As if to say, "Hey, this is music, not arithmetic."

SS: Exactly.

DN: Because there are lots of ways you could have unloaded those three pulses.

SS: Sure, like in the körvaïs, depending on...

DN: How fixed is this in your mind? Might you play it like that another time?

SS: Sure.

DN: (plays tape, stops at 17:32) The lead-in to that is a caturašra motif, and that's interesting, because the phrases that start the körvai are tišra phrases. But the körvai is caturašra.

SS: Yeah, the körvai starts with tišra phrases, but the preparatory work is all caturašra.

DN: And you sort of hide the beginning of the körvai.

SS: Yes, because those tišra phrases are included in the caturašra phrases. This körvai is my master's körvai. And also, this comes from Dakshinamurthy Pillai. I believe the last körvai is, also. This is one of my favorites.
DN: One special thing about it is that, although it's a sixteen-aksara körvai, because it starts with those phrases it invites this kind of treatment. You can play literally any sixteen-aksara körvai in tiśram and it will work mathematically, but this one sits so nicely.

SS: That's right, because it coincides with the tāla beat, and also it has its own beauty of the solū, the phrases. Here too, the reduction is by phrases, and partly by kaṇakkū.

DN: The other thing that's worth mentioning is the contrast between the repetitions of each line by the use of the open and closed left hand.

SS: I have also talked about the use of toppi sciedal and toppi viṇudal.

DN: (plays tape, stops at 17:40) That type of stuff you were just playing, a lot of times that will signal the end of the solo, but it doesn't have to. It strikes me as an older style sarvalaghū.

SS: What makes you say 'older style'? 

DN: More the way the term used to be used. 

SS: It's hard to label it as 'old' or 'new', but surely, these patterns occur toward the end of the solo. I call this a connector to what I have played up until then, and to the 'paran' section.

DN: But I've heard people start like that, and then break off into another gati or another whole section.

SS: Sure, that's possible. If it had been a solo concert, I might have taken another ten or fifteen minutes and gone off into miśram or something, using the same phrase. There are all kinds of possibilities. There are no set rules about these patterns—when and where and for how long these should occur. 

DN: But if you started out your solo like that, it would be wrong, in rendu kaḷāi.
SS: I would question that. Suppose it was a radio program, and there were only thirty seconds left, I might have started out my solo like that. (laughs) Or if I have to catch a plane or something.

DN: It's a matter of context.

SS: Exactly. That's why I say a norm has been created in terms of what follows what, but there are no strict rules about it. I am guided by certain aesthetics. I have often wondered to myself, "What if I just started out with ‘ta na ta di na ta di na’ and then going to ‘ta - din - din - na -’", just switching the order.

DN: Okay, let's listen to the parasns. (plays tape, stops at end of solo) The perīya mōrā here is pretty much a derivative of
di - - - tan - gi ḍu di ku ta ka ta ri gi ḍu

How would you recite this?

SS: I wouldn't call it derivative—I wanted to play something slightly different from the standard. You can see some patterns from the kōrvai I used in the beginning.

\[
\begin{align*}
  & ta - di - ta lān - gu ki ṭa ta ka ta ri ki ṭa tom - \\
  & di - ta. lān - gu ki ṭa ta ka ta ri ki ṭa tom - \\
  & ta lān - gu ki ṭa ta ka ta ri ki ṭa tom - \\
  & ta ka jo nu tom - ta - tom - ta - tom - -
\end{align*}
\]

That was the phrase I used.

DN: Were you consciously using something that connected with that first kōrvai?

SS: It's possible. In this concert you can see it in the beginning and the ending.
DN: This last körvai has some structural similarities with the last tiśra gati körvai.

SS: I want to tell you something about this körvai. This is, again, Dakshinamurthy Pillai’s körvai, and my master played it a number of times. It was one of his favorites. Some of the phrases he would use might be slightly different from what I have played.

DN: Well, that first part has to be absolutely empty, and the last part has to be absolutely full, but how you fill that must be individual.

SS: Individual style, and subject to interpretations.

DN: Again, if you look at the sections you kind of scratch your head, but the sound is powerful.

SS: I would call this a gigantic körvai; very powerful, and very classic. It’s very dense—mathematically also, very interesting.

DN: What do you mean by that?

SS: Well, the beginning coincides with the tāla beats, but when you repeat it, what was on the beat gets shifted.

DN: I want to thank you very much, we’re through with the solo.

SS: I wish you all the best on your doctoral thesis. I can’t wait to see it in print.
WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

MRDANGAM MIND:
THE TANIAVARTANAM IN KARNATAK MUSIC
VOLUME III: THE TRANSCRIPTIONS

by

David Paul Nelson

A dissertation in Music
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at
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The following example is the second half of a cycle:

The second half of the cycle includes the second and fourth bars of the measure, which are indicated by vertical lines. The third and fourth lines carry the right and left hand strokes respectively. The second bar is essentially a repeat of the first bar, with the addition of an extra note in the left hand.

This would have required a bar compassing 3:4.5:7:9 or 370 possible pieces. This was certainly not within my power, and so the visual perfection of which I have been striving is still a dream.

I am not quite sure if I have reached the stage where I want to be, but I have made a few drawings of my own, and these are my first attempts at visual perfection. I have not yet found a way to draw these drawings accurately.

I saw a picture of a drumming in a way that clearly related to the notation used elsewhere in this study. It seemed important to transcribe the actual drumming in a way that clearly related to the notation used in the present piece of work. A similar approach was taken by Sankey in his introduction of a new method of drumming. He showed great promise but was not very easily visible. I hope that my reasons for selecting the use of symbolic notation will become more apparent in the near future.

While I am not a composer of notation for the drum, I have been using simple notations for my own compositions. These are my first attempts at writing for the drum and do not aim to be exact copies of the original pieces.

About the notation: There is no standard stroke notation for the drum, but it has been used successfully in India, where a student can use his teacher's instructions along with the notation.
alignment with the stroke notation. Without the decoder, certain problems arise. How, for example, does one write "123"? The solution I adopted

produced them. However, the tone then produces the desirable marks, instead of being a monosyllabic sound, and therefore I could not control the vowel

away from the proper pronunciation of solfège is necessary. For understanding the flow of the piece and to gain a sense of respect for the culture that

resources: a tone would produce the appropriate directional marks, and the solfège used by the chiropractic physicians, capturing the dance

The solfège used in the transcription differs in several respects from that used in the interviews and articles. For instance, I had access to two important

Solfège

stroke by stroke notation for the well-known parts in previous writings, so although I have provided a structural solfège notation of these,

would clinch the page, which had to be reduced in size twenty-five percent in order to conform with University guidelines. I have made no attempt whatever
disted from left hand steps, which I note as «O». Complex strokes are noted as «X». I have not used a range between right and left hand strokes, in order to

With respect to left hand strokes, I have made some changes. Left hand «T» represented in Range's system as «X», is in my system written as «X», as

finger, or both

do be represented by only one character. Thus «T» becomes «T» and a non-italicized «T» represents "tenement, tenants", played with the thumb middle

of stroke characters, «T» would have made impossible the vertical alignment with the solfège I was trying to achieve. Each stroke, however, had

use of the subject characters, «T» would have made impossible the vertical alignment with the solfège I was trying to achieve. Our notation for the vowels, "tenement, tenants", which involve the

inverted stroke notation that is used in the original—in this case, «Z». Rather than «Z». The second difference in the present situation is that I had to find shots

there are occasions here where it was necessary to include shots in Range's system for example, Range's system's two-finger «X», in such cases I have

and when our ideas with our own style. The present needs are slightly different; in two ways. First, not every diagram used exactly the same stroke, and

who worked with him. Range notation during those years will therefore recognize certain features of it. The notation system was well-used in the lessons

The stroke notation used in these transcriptions is derived from the notation used in my own studies under T. Rangehahn from 1979 until 1985. Anyone

STROKE NOTATION
requires the use of capital letters to represent the retroflex sounds "ṭa", "ḍu", "ṇu" etc. In the transcriptions, then, "ki ṭa ta ka" will be written "ki Ta ta ka", "ṭa din gi ṭa tom" will become "ta din gi Na tom", and so forth.

As for the drummers' own solkaṭṭu, this is used in every part of this study except for the transcriptions. This is a choice governed by aesthetic concerns. Rather than use my own solkaṭṭu for portions of the solos that did not come up in the interviews and theirs for portions that did, I decided to leave the transcriptions entirely in my own choice of solkaṭṭu.

RHYTHMIC VALUES

In this area also, I have departed somewhat from the usual practice in the interest of keeping all the beats the same size. Underlining phrases to indicate doubling of tempo is not used in this study. Instead, the following conventions apply:

Unit time, or pulse-level articulation, is represented by a consonant followed by a vowel; thus the phrase "ṭa ka di mi", comprising four pulses, can occupy one mātra in caturaśra gati. Double time is represented by removing the vowels and removing half the space among syllables, as follows: "ṭ k ṭ m t k ṭ m". One further doubling is possible if all spaces are removed: "ṭkḍm tkḍm tkḍm tkḍm". A short dash (-) following a syllable lengthens its duration by one syllable. To continue with the same example, the following four speeds may all be said to occupy one whole beat:

```
ta - ka - di - mi -
ta ka di mi ta ka di mi
ṭ k ṭ m t k ṭ m t k ṭ m t k ṭ m
ṭkḍm tkḍm tkḍm tkḍm tkḍm tkḍm tkḍm tkḍm
```
Disrupting the rhythm now.

appear in the chart. They are of which may be seen as a two-finger variant of "z" and "h" a lifting stroke used to lower the pitch of the valanced stroke without laughter. Along with an indication of whether the stroke is a valanced stroke (usually right hand) or lifted (usually left hand). The above are two strokes that do not appear in the Appendix 1. The following list includes stroke names and the symbols for them used in the following pages. Since anyone who is reading these translations is no doubt
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(55.7)

ह का दिल के फलो पर कान का कान का कार

(55.7)

6 7 8

5 6 7 8

4 5 6 7 8

3 4 5 6 7 8

2 3 4 5 6 7 8

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8