

# ŚYĀMĀ ŚĀSTRĪ'S HANDLING OF MIŚRA CĀPU TĀLA

## IN HIS KALYĀNI RĀGA KĪRTANA TALLI NINNU

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### **Introduction**

Śyāmā Śāstri, the eldest of the musical trinity is known for his unique contribution in the realm of tāla. His compositions are laden with bhakti and bhāva with the central theme being pleading and conversing with the Goddess as his own mother, asking for Her grace. His compositions appear to be simple, but on a deeper look, there are intricate rhythmic patterns woven into the composition. Śyāmā Śāstri has composed different musical forms; varṇa, kīrtana, svarajati and gīta in various rāga-s and tāla-s. The tāla-s that he has dealt with are ādi, tiśra tripuṭa, rūpaka, aṭa, but the genius of Śyāmā Śāstri is in the extraordinary treatment of the miśra cāpu tāla. The way Śyāmā Śāstri has dealt with miśra cāpu offers great scope for study. The structure of the tāla itself, the intertwining of melody and lyric within the framework of the tāla with various permutations and combinations and the different ways of perceiving the cāpu tāla, reveal the virtuosity of this vāggēyakāra.

### **Miśra Cāpu – Structure and Use**

Miśra cāpu belongs to a group of tāla-s which are popular in use today like khaṇḍa cāpu, tiśra cāpu (short rūpaka), but which do not fall under the category of the 35 tāla-s. The 35 tāla-s which are an expansion of the sapta tāla-s by prastāra, use the three aṅga-s – laghu, druta and anudruta. Cāpu tāla-s are not defined in terms of aṅga-s but are described as a whole, with regard to the total time span or duration of the tāla. Miśra cāpu and khaṇḍa cāpu are made up of two unequal parts, i.e. khaṇḍa cāpu is 2 and 3 and miśra cāpu is 3 and 4.

The seven structured tāla finds use in various musical forms by many composers. Right from Aruṇagirināthar's first composition 'Muttaittaru pattittirunagai', this tāla has been dealt with in different forms by several composers. Kṣētragna, the telugu vāggēyakāra has composed many pada-s in tiśra jāti tripuṭa tāla and miśra cāpu. These pada-s have a unique structure, wherein the eḍuppu in some cases is after 1 ½ akṣara-s after the tāla commences. Some of his pada-s composed in tiśra tripuṭa are rendered in miśra cāpu today.

Tyāgarāja has composed many kīrtana-s in miśra cāpu ranging from simple kīrtana-s to grand kīrtana-s like ēmi jēsite nēmi, endudāgināḍo, manasu svādhīnamaina etc. Muttusvāmi Dīkṣitar has composed in miśra jāti ēka and tiśra jāti tripuṭa, though most of these songs are sung today in miśra cāpu tāla.

## Śyāmā Śāstri and Mīśra Cāpu

Śyāmā Śāstri has composed 17 songs in mīśra cāpu tāla. From an overview of these compositions, it is seen that he has dealt with 7 in different ways.

- 3 + 4 (3+2+2) – Ex: Marivere, Kāmākṣi Baṅgāru, Ninne nammi etc.
- 4 + 3 (2+2+3) – Ex: Ninnuvināga

The second category of 4+3 exhibits Śyāmā Śāstri's intellect and presents an interesting study. This approach of perceiving the cāpu tāla in reverse, or as 4+3 probably existed in the Śyāmā Śāstri tradition as can be gleaned by the notations in the Family notebook of Śyāmā Śāstri. All the compositions in cāpu tāla have been presented in a notational structure of 4+3, irrespective of whether the kīrtana is composed in krama mīśra cāpu or vilōma cāpu. The vilōma structure of cāpu tāla has been handled in two different ways:

- 2 + 2 + 3 - Ninnuvināga
- 2 + 3 + 2 – Talli ninnu neranammi, Mīnalōcana

Of these, the second variety of 2+3+2 has an interesting arrangement, where the relation between the dhātu, mātu and the tāla structure gives a feeling of rhythmic complexity. The kīrtana 'Talli ninnu' in rāga Kalyāṇi belonging to this category offers an interesting study and analysis. In the present paper, the melodic aspects of this kīrtana with respect to the tāla structure as handled by the composer will be dealt with.

### Talli Ninnu Neranammi - Analysis

On a study of various notations and renditions of talli ninnu, there seem to be three versions of the same song. These versions will now be presented and analysed.

Points	Version 1	Version 2	Version 3
Structure of composition	2 + 3 + 2 Taṭṭu Vīccu Taṭṭu	3 + 4 Vīccu Taṭṭu Taṭṭu	2 + 2 + 3 Taṭṭu Taṭṭu Vīccu, changed subsequently to Vīccu Taṭṭu Taṭṭu
Notations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Family Notebook of Śyāmā Śāstri</li><li>• Vidya Shankar</li><li>• Saṅgīta svaraprastāra sāgaramu</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ranga Ramanuja Iyengar</li><li>• S. Ramanathan</li></ul>	No notations available in this format
Renditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer</li><li>• S. Kalyanaraman</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• B. Krishnamurthy</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• D.K. Pattammal</li><li>• D. K. Jayaraman</li><li>• Rama Ravi</li></ul>

Let us look into these three versions one by one. Version 1 seems to be the oldest chronologically. The notation in Saṅgīta svaraprastāra sāgaramu of Nadamuni Panditar is earliest available notation (1914). The structure of the song seems to be in taṭṭu vīccu taṭṭu format. The family notebook of Śyāmā Śāstri presents a bare notation with very little connecting anusvara-s. Nevertheless, the base structure of the song can be understood. The tāla in the index is given as cāpu, but in the notation itself is mentioned as ‘miśram’. The notation is split as 4 and 3; the song starting after 2 akṣara-s. This eḍuppu of 2 taḷli is maintained throughout the song.

t t	v	t t	v	t t	v	t t	v
; - r s	Ṇ s	R R	g G	; g m	P p	G G	r P
tal .	. li	nin nu	ne ra	. nam	. mi	nā nu	vi na
G -							
vē							

(Version 1 – Śyāmā Śāstri family notebook)

Vidya Shankar’s notation presents a more evolved picture with addition of a few saṅgati-s, which is developed on the base notation present in the family notebook of Śyāmā Śāstri. Renditions of Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer and S. Kalyanaraman were analysed and found to be similar to this format with the same eḍuppu and structure, barring a few differences which will be presented subsequently.

The second version is found, as mentioned before, in the notations of Ranga Ramanuja Iyengar and S. Ramanathan. Ranga Ramanuja Iyengar gives the tāla as tripuṭa, whereas S.Ramanathan gives it as miśra laghu. Both these notations are split as 3 and 4 (or 6 and 8 in the case of Ranga Ramanuja Iyengar) with tāla demarcations. The eḍuppu of the song is 2 taḷli in this format, which gives a completely different feel where the tāla accents and sāhitya syllables undergo a change. The actual melody or notation is very similar to the first version, except for a few minor additions and changes. But the alteration of the eḍuppu alone gives a different feel to the song. B. Krishnamurthy has sung in this format.

v	t t	v	t t	v	t t	v	t t
; s	; S	R - r	, g G	; p	; p m	m g - g	r - r m g
tal	. li	nin nu	. ne ra	. nam	. mi .	nā . nu	. vi na .
g r -							
vē .							

(Version 2 – S. Ramanathan notation)

The third version is seen only in practical renditions and does not seem to have a notation source. Here, the eḍuppu of the pallavi is on the taṭṭu, i.e. the structure appears to be 4 + 3.

v	t t	v	t t	v	t t	v	t t
; ,	g r s ṅ	R g	, g G	R - g	M P	<u>pm</u> g g	r <u>gD</u> Pm
	tal . li .	nin nu	. ne ra	. nam	. mi	nā . nu	. vi na
G r -							
vē .							

(Version 3 – D.K. Pattammal rendition)

Though the pallavi eḍuppu is on the taṭṭu, the ensuing melody does not retain this eḍuppu and follows the normal miśra cāpu structure of 3 + 4. The anupallavi and caraṇam eḍuppu begins after 2 akṣara-s in normal miśra cāpu.

v	t t	v	t t
; d	n ś Ś	; ś n	d n Ś
el	. la lō	. ka	. mu la

(Version 3 – D.K. Pattammal rendition)

v	t t	v	t t	v	t t	v	t t
; g	m p P	<u>P d</u> P g	M P	<u>p m</u> G	d p D	P , d	<u>pm</u> g g p
śyā	. ma kṛṣ	ṇa . .	pa ri	pā .	li . ni	śū .	li . ni .
m r -							
. .							

(Version 3 – D.K. Pattammal rendition)

The entire melody seems to be in a normal miśra cāpu format, but there is much difference seen in the structure. This version seems to be popularly sung by present day musicians.

### Pallavi Melody

Coming to the melodic aspects of this composition; the pallavi begins with a dīrgha ṣaḍja. The very beginning is interesting, as the 3 kārvai-s do not sync with the tāla accent, giving a feeling of complex rhythm.

t t	v	t t	v
; S	, S	R R	, g <u>gr</u>
tal	. li	nin nu	. ne ra

(Vidya Shankar notation)

The same 3 kārvai-s are seen in the 3<sup>rd</sup> āvarta, almost like a samvādi.

t t	v	t t	v	t t
; - P	, P	<u>p m</u> G g r	r <u>r P m</u>	<sup>g</sup> R -
. nam	. mi	nā . nu .	vi na .	vē

(Vidya Shankar notation)

There is a kind of symmetry present in this very first line, where the first and third āvarta-s start after 2 akṣara-s with a kārvai of 3 counts.

The graha svara of the pallavi is seen to change in different versions; some starting in ṣaḍja, some in ṛṣabha and some in gāndhāra. The ṣaḍja eḍuppu is seen in the notation of Vidya Shankar, and the renditions of Semmangudi and S. Kalyanaraman. The notation given by S. Ramanathan and the rendition by B. Krishnamurthy also bear the same ṣaḍja graha though the eḍuppu structure differs (3+4).

t t	v	t t	v	t t
; S	, S	R R	g G	R -
tal	. li	nin nu	ne ra	.

(Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer rendition)

The graha svara is different in the notation of Ranga Ramanuja Iyengar.

v	t t	v	t t	v
; r	; S	R r	, g G	;
tal	. li	nin nu	. ne ra	.

(Ranga Ramanuja Iyengar notation)

And in the rendition by D.K. Pattammal, the graha svara is gāndhāra.

v	t t	v	t t	v
; ,	g r s ṇ	R g	, g G	R -
	tal . li .	nin nu	. ne ra	.

(D.K. Pattammal rendition)

The base melody of the pallavi ranges between ṣaḍja and pañcama. The melody of ‘Talli ninnu nera’ remains same throughout and the saṅgati-s are seen in the second half of the pallavi ‘nammi nānu vinavē’.

t t	v	t t	v	t t	v	t t	v
; S	, S	R R	, g p	M - P	, P	<u>pm</u> G g r	r <u>rPm</u>
tal	. li	nin nu	. ne ra	. nam	. mi	nā . nu .	vi na .
<sup>g</sup> R – <u>rs</u> s	, S	R R	, g <u>gr</u>	; <u>Gmp</u>	D p	-do-	-do-
vē- tal .	. li	nin nu	. ne ra	. nam	. mi		
				; <u>gmpd</u>	N n	<u>dp</u> P <sup>m</sup> G r	-do-
				. nam .	. mi	nā nu	
				; <u>gmpd</u>	<u>nŚ, śn</u>	-do-	-do-
				. nam .	. mi		

				; <u>gmpd</u>	<u>nšRḡrṣn</u>	<u>śndppmgr</u>	<u>RNśnDpml</u>
				. nam .	. . mi	nā . nu .	vi na . .
g r -							
vē							

(Vidya Shankar notation)

The notation in Saṅgīta svaraprastāra sāgaramu presents 9 saṅgati-s, of which the melody in the last three saṅgati-s follows a very different arrangement from the base melody. This alteration in the base melodic structure does not seem logical, where the eḍuppu of the pallavi is changed to tāra sthāyi ṣaḍja.

t t	v	t t	v	t t	v	t t	v
; Ś	, Ś	Ś N	ś Ś	; <u>d n d n</u>	d N	d p D	n N
tal	. li	nin nu	ne ra	. nam .	. mi	nā . nu	vi na
Ś -							
vē							

(Saṅgīta svaraprastāra sāgaramu notation)

In practical renditions, the last saṅgati has some odukkal phrasing, to add certain punch to end the pallavi. For example, in S. Kalyanaraman's rendition;

t t	v	t t	v	t t	v	t t	v
; S	, S	R R	g G	; <u>gmpd</u>	<u>nš ndpd</u>	<u>pm g g r</u>	<u>gmpdnd</u>
. tal	. li	nin nu	ne ra	. nam	. mi .	nā . nu	vi na .
<u>pmgr-srgm</u>	<u>pmgrsn</u>	R R	<u>ndpm g</u>	; <u>gmpd</u>	<u>nšrḡ r ś</u>	<u>nd- pmg g</u>	r- <u>śndp</u>
vē . tal .	. li .	nin nu	ne ra .	. nam	. . mi	. nā . nu	. vi na
<u>m-mgr</u>							
. vē							

(S. Kalyanaraman rendition)

In B. Krishnamurthy's rendition, the last two saṅgati-s are as follows.

v	t t	v	t t	v	t t	v	t t
; s	; S	R r	, g G	; <u>gm</u>	<u>pdnś ḡrṣn</u>	<u>dp pmgm</u>	<u>mrgnndp-d</u>
tal	. li	nin nu	. ne ra	. nam	. . mi nā	. nu .	. vi na vē
<u>pmgr-</u>				, r n	d m g - n	d m g	r - d m g
. .				. nam	. . mi nā	. . .	nu vi na .
r g -							
. vē							

(B. Krishnamurthy rendition)

This last saṅgati seems to have been added to incorporate the three patterns of five. No notational source is found for this saṅgati.

### Anupallavi Melody

The anupallavi starts on tāra ṣaḍja, a straight samvādi of the pallavi graha svāra. Herein there are differences seen in the different versions. The graha svāra has been changed in some versions to dhaivata, and the kārvaī-s also undergo change.

Vidya Shankar's notation starts on tāra ṣaḍja with a dīrgha kārvaī of 4 counts. This is seen in Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer's rendition also.

t t	v	t t	v
; Ś	; śn	Ś śn D	n Ś
el	. la	lō ka .	mu la

(Vidya Shankar notation)

The change in the graha svāra is seen in S. Ramanathan's notation and in many of the renditions (S. Kalyanaraman, B. Krishnamurthy, D.K.Pattammal). This change affects the vādi samvādi poruttam present in the melody of the pallavi and anupallavi.

v	t t	v	t t
; d	, n Ś	; ś	d n Ś
el	. la lō	. ka	. mu la

(S. Ramanathan notation)

The first line is repeated few times with saṅgati-s. Herein three types of rendering is seen, one where the nyāsa is maintained in tāra ṣaḍja (Vidya Shankar), second where the nyāsa alternates between tāra ṣaḍja and pañcama (S. Ramanathan, S. Kalyanaraman), and the third where the nyāsa alternates between tāra ṣaḍja and niṣāda (Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer).

t t	v	t t	v	t t	v	t t	v
; Ś	; śn	Ś śn D	n Ś	; D	dĠr ś	nśrś ś d	n Ś
el	. la	lō ka	mu la	. kel	. . la	lō . ka.	mu la

(Vidya Shankar notation)

v	t t	v	t t	v	t t	v	t t
; d	, n Ś	; ś	d n Ś	; d	, n Ś	; d	dīr śn dpP
el	. la lō	. ka	. mu la	. el	. la lō	. ka	. mu la
; p	d n Ś	; ś	d n Ś	; d	, n Ġ	; d	dīr śn dpP
. el	. la lō	. ka	. mu la	. el	. la lō	. ka	. mu la

(S. Ramanathan notation)

t t	v	t t	v	t t	v	t t	v
; Ś	; śṛ	Ś Ś, d	n Ś	; Ś	; śṛ	ś n D P, m	p d N
el	. la	lō ka .	mu la	. el	. la	lō . ka .	mu la
; d ġ	ṛ Ś	nśṛś śnD	N, Ś,	; d ġ	ṛ Ś, n	dnśndpPm	p d N
. el .	. la	lō . ka	mu la	. el .	. la	lō . ka .	mu la

(Semangudi Srinivasa Iyer rendition)

A peculiar point is seen in Version 3, sung by D.K.Pattammal, where the eḍuppu of the anupallavi is changed in a saṅgati. Such a change is not seen in any other notation or rendition.

v	t t	v	t t	v	t t	v	t t
; d	n ś Ś	; ś n	d n Ś	; - n	ṛ ś ś ś n d	d p p d	Nśnd nśnd
el	. la lō	. ka	. mu la	. kel	. la lō .	. . ka	. . mu .
P m -	p dn ś ś	; ś n	d ṛ Ś Ṛ,	, d - d	ṛ ś ś ś n d	d p p d	Nśnd nśnd
la .	kel . la lō	. ka	. mu la .	. . kel	. la lō .	. . ka	. . mu .
P m							
la .							

(D.K.Pattammal rendition)

The reason for such a change is unknown.

The second line also witnesses a few changes in the different versions. The notations of Vidya Shankar, S. Ramanathan and Ranga Ramanuja Iyengar and the rendition of Semangudi Srinivasa Iyer present the 2<sup>nd</sup> line starting after a 2<sup>nd</sup> akṣara pause, whereas in all other renditions, the second line ‘kādāramaina yuna’ starts on samam. There is a resulting change seen in the placement of sāhitya also.

t t	v	t t	v	t t	v	t t	v
; d ġ	ṛ Ś	nśṛś śnD	N, Ś,	; ś n d	P ,	pm g g r	R pm
el .	. la	lō . ka .	mu la	. kā .	dā .	ra . mai	yun na
ḡR -							
nā							

(Semangudi Srinivasa Iyer rendition)

v	t t	v	t t	v	t t	v	t t
; p d	n ś Ś	; ś n	d ṛ Ś Ṛ,	Ś , ṛ	ś n D P	P , d	p m G G
. el	. la lō	. ka	. mu la .	kā .	dā . ra	mai .	na . nā
G r -							
. .							

(D.K.Pattammal rendition)



In this version, the phrase leading to the pallavi seems to be only a vowel extension and not suitably spaced.

### Carana melody

Coming to the caraṇa, there are three caraṇa-s, out of which most versions present either the first or the last mudra caraṇa. Vidya Shankar's notation presents the first caraṇa; all the 4 lines follow the same eḍuppu as the pallavi and anupallavi. The third line is repeated several times with a part of the second line. This is seen to be followed by Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer also in part.

t t	v	t t	v	t t	v	t t	v
; G	m P	; P	p P	M D	p D	p m P	m PdP
ā	dī śak	. ti	nī vu	pa rā	. ku	sē . .	ya ka .
p m - G	g G	p m P,n	d d p P	p g m p D	, P	G G	r S
. . ā	da riñ	. . cu	ṭa ki .	de . mañ .	. ci	sa ma	ya mu
; ṇ s	R s	R , r	; ,	; g m p d	, P	\G G	r S
. gā .	dā sa	rō . ja	. .	. mañ .	. ci	sa ma	ya mu
-do-				; g m p d	N n	dpPpdpmG	r S
				. mañ .	. ci	sa . ma.	ya mu
-do-				s r g g ś	.ndpPpd	pmG Gpm	r S
				i di mañ	. ci . .	sa . ma .	ya mu
; ṇ s	R s	R s r	g G	; g p	m P	; D	n Ś
gā .	dā sa	rō ja .	bha vā	. cyu .	ta śam	. bhu	nu ta
; D d ġ	ṛ Ś	\D D	d d N,	P ;	ś d p	G ;	g gPm
. pā .	. dā	nī du	dā .	. .	sā . nu	dā .	su ḍa
ṠR -							
nē							

(Vidya Shankar notation)

There is a slight difference in the notation in the family notebook of Śyāmā Śastri, wherein the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> lines start on samam, not following the 2 ta||i structure seen in the rest of the kīrtana. This is also seen in the notation by S. Ramanathan.

v	t t	v	t t	v	t t	v	t t
S r	, s R	; g	, r G	; p	g m P	; d	, n Ś
gā dā	. sa rō	. ja	. bha vā	. cyu	. ta śam	. bhu	. nu ta
D ,	ġ ṛ Ṡ	d ṛ ś	n d p m	G ,	n d p m	g g - m	m n d m
pā .	dā . .	nī . .	du . . .	dā .	sā . nu.	dā . .	. su . .
g r -							
ḍe .							

(S. Ramanathan notation)

There are variations seen in the mudra caraṇam as presented by different artistes – S.Kalyanaraman, B.Krishnamurthy and D.K.Pattammal. In the rendering by Kalyanaraman, the 3<sup>rd</sup> line is changed from the base structure, the line starting in the previous āvarta itself.

t t	v	t t	v	t t	v	t t	v
; G	m P	; P	p P	<u>p m</u> g D	p D	; P	p m g
śyā	ma kṛṣ	. ṇa	pa ri	pā . .	li ni	. ja	na . ni
m r – G	m P	; P	<u>n D P</u> ,	G N	d p m	<u>d p m g</u> r	, r s
. . kā	mi tār	. tha	pha la	kañ .	ja lō .	ca . ni .	. kau
s r s – r	; ,	G – r g	; ,	M m p	; p	d n Ś	; ,
mā ri rā	. .	ṇi pu rā	. .	ṇi pa rā	. śak	. . ti	. .

(S. Kalyanaraman rendition)

Interestingly, in the rendering of the mudra caraṇa in versions 2 and 3, the first two lines are rendered 2 taḷli, but the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> line are on samam. The sāhitya of this caraṇa probably lead to such a change in structure.

## Conclusion

To conclude, it can be seen that the three versions portray different structures of the same song. It can be surmised based on early notations, that Śyāmā Śāstri perceived this song in a format of 2+3+2. More so, this structure of 2+3+2 is seen to be handled in plenty by the composer. How and when changes in this format took place are uncertain. The second version probably arose due to a difference in perception of the original notation, wherein the base structure of the kīrtana is maintained, but the tāla has undergone a change from 4+3 to 3+4. It could have even been the result of overlooking the original structure and adapting it to miśra cāpu of today. Besides, there has been a tradition where the tāla in certain compositions has been changed from vilōma cāpu to miśra cāpu.

It is surprising to see how the third version has come to be popular, even though the structure of the kīrtana, the structure of the tāla, all have undergone a significant change, that too without any source for such change. Also, the structure in this version is not uniform wherein the melody of the anupallavi is extended unnaturally to lead to the pallavi. The anupallavi and caraṇa have similar eḍuppu-s, whereas the pallavi eḍuppu does not seem justifiable. Probably this change took place to mould this kīrtana into the so-called vilōma cāpu format.

Furthermore, this composition though seen in early notations, has not been popular in the concert circuit till recently. A well-established kīrtana which is popularly sung is less prone to undergo extreme changes in the basic structure. This could have possibly been a reason for the many versions of this song. Probably, just as some kīrtana-s of Śyāmā Śāstri can be sung

in rūpakam and ādi tīśra naḍai, this song too could be sung in miśra cāpu and vilōma cāpu without affecting the melodic structure.

The nature of miśra cāpu tāla is such that it offers huge scope and flexibility for a composer to exercise his musical imagination in dealing with the tāla in any manner. Which raises the question, whether miśra cāpu should be perceived 3 and 4 or 4 and 3, or just a grand seven structured form?

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