

# Pancha Tala - An Analytical Study

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**Abstract**

The Talas of Karnatic music has a an ancient origin, We can understand their tala or rhythmic knowledge through the Pāṇars of Sangam period with the enormous musical instruments they have used. Sangitaratnakara of 12th century shows evidences of raga and tala and relates the structure, technique and reasoning behind ragas and talas. Later Thirupugazh of Arunagirinadhar is the only text which gives details about many talas which was written in Tamil belonged to 15th century. The first 5 talas in the 108 talas are known as Marga talas. The first five talas of 108 are also called Pancha tala. As they are five in number they are called Pancha talas. They have only combination of three angaslagu, guru and pluta. The angas like kākapadam, anudrutham and drutham are not used in this Pancha talas. The texts Sangita Chandrikai and Tala Deepika completely differs with all the texts in their names. In Bootha Vedhala Vaguppu, one of the Thiru Vaguppu Arunagirinadhar spoke about this Pancha tala. Pancha marabu explains this Pancha tala which are originated from the jathis of the tāndavam of Shiva Nataraja. This is an analytical study based on the information already available. A critical evaluation is made with the materials already in use.

**Keywords:** *Pancha tala, 108 Tala, Pancha Marabu, Thiru vaguppu, Angas of Tala*

**Introduction**

The sangam period shows enormous examples for percussion instruments through Ettu thogai and Pathuppattu. More than two hundred musical instruments are mentioned in these texts. The pāṇar handled many types of shin covered instruments with many heads with different sizes, with different playing methods depending upon their life styles. They are generally called as Parai. With these instruments we can understand their tala or rhythmic knowledge. Later Silapadikaram speaks about many kinds of percussion instruments like Tannumai, maddalam, parai and many more in second Century. The statues of Thirugnana Sambandar sixth century and Kāraikal Ammaiyyār of fifth century are with bronze Tala Cymbals in their hand shows that they are best tala exponents. This Thirupugazh is the only text which gives details about many talas which was written in Tamil belonged to 15th century. Sangitaratnakara is one of the most complete historic medieval era Hindu treatises on this subject that has survived into the modern era, that relates to the structure, technique and reasoning behind ragas and talas. Thus Talas of Karnatic music has a an ancient origin.

**Texts on Tala**

We can observe many works mainly on tala. They are Tala lakshana, Tala Vishaya, Tala Vadhana, Tala Samudhra, Tala deepika, Tala Mahoddhati and Tala Lakshana Sangraha, Daththilam, Talakkali Venba, Tala Darpanam, Chachchaputa venba are some of the works seen on Tala alone. Works like Suddhānanda Prakāsam, Raga tala Prastara and Raga Tala Chintāmani deal with the subject of Tala

at length. There are reference to Tala in non musical literatures like Silappadikāram, Kallādam, Patthuppāttu and Puranānuru. Many works have chapters devoted to tala example Pancha marabu (music), Natyasāstra (dance).

### Marga talas

The first 5 talas in the 108 talas are known as Marga talas. The laghu, guru and pluta alone occur in these Marga talas ('1' denotes Laghu, '8' denotes Guru and '8<sup>1</sup>' denotes Pluta). In Pancha tala the duration of lagu is equal to five counts. The Sangita Samaya Sāra of Pārvadeva and Sangita Makaranda of Nahadha give a list of 101 talas. These two works are prior to Sangita Ratnakara of Saranga deva. The pancha tala figure at the commencement of the series. In both Sangita Samaya Sāra and Sangita Makaranda the tala names and lakshnas are given in anushtup slokas. Saranga deva in Sangita Ratnakara mentions the five Margi talas and 120 Desi talas. Most of his desi Talas figure in the scheme of 108 talas. Natya Sastra contain description of tala sastra but there was no list of tala names. Prominent Tala system is Ashtothara tala (108). In this the first five talas are grouped under Marga tala.

### Pancha talas

Pancha is Five. The first five talas of 108 are called Pancha tala ('1' denotes Laghu, '8' denotes Guru and '8<sup>1</sup>' denotes Pluta).

No	Name of the Tala	Symbol	Angas
1	Chachchatputa	8 8 1 8 <sup>1</sup>	guru + guru + lagu + pluta
2	Chāchatputa	8 1 1 8	guru + lagu + lagu + guru
3	Shatpitaputrika	8 <sup>1</sup> 1 8 8 1 8 <sup>1</sup>	pluta + lagu + guru + guru + lagu + pluta
4	Sampadveshtaka	8 <sup>1</sup> 8 8 8 8 <sup>1</sup>	pluta + guru + guru + guru + pluta
5	Udghatta	8 8 8	guru + guru + guru

### Origin of Pancha Tala

In music field there is a strong faith that everything should have been originated from God. Here it is said that the pancha talas are originated from the five faces of Shiva. The five faces are Esānam, Thathpurusham, Agoram, Vāmadevam, and Sathyojātham.

According to Pancha marabu, Pancha talas emerged from the rhythmic sounds (jathis) "tha, dhi, thom, nam, jam" created from the tāndavam of Shiva Nataraja of Sabai (Kanaka Sabai). It also says "chachchaputa mādhi sāttrumo raindhi nume" which means the Pancha tala starts from chachchaputa. These pancha jathis later form the Pancha tala.

Pancha tala	Shivas five faces of Origin
Esānam	Urgattitham
Thathpurusham	Thathpurusham
Agoram	Shatpithaputhrikam
Vāmadevam	Chāchaputam
Chāchaputam	Chāchaputam

### **Arunagirinadhar and Pancha tala**

Arunagirinadhar in Bootha Vedhala Vaguppu, one of the Thiru Vaguppu spoke about this Pancha tala. Out of 80 line of Bootha Vedhala Vaguppu the 63 and 64th lines mentions the pancha tala. It starts with Urkattita, chachchaputa, chācha puta, shatpithaputhrika and Kanda Sampadhi as per poetic structure. The line ends with “Kanja Panchaga thala mām padi”.

கைச்சதியி னாமுறைவி தித்தவா முற்கடித

சச்சபுட சாசபுட சட்பிதா புத்திரிக

63

கண்டச் சம்பதிப் பேத மாம்பல

கஞ்சப் பஞ்சகத் தாள மாம்படி

64 - Bootha vedhala vaguppu

Kaichchadiyi nāmuraivi dhitthavā murgatha

Chachchaputa chāchapuda shatpitha puthrika 63

Kanta Sambathi bedha māmpala

Kanjap Panjakat thala māmpadi

64 - Bootha vedhala vaguppu

### **Pancha marabu and Pancha tala**

#### **108 Talas**

Chachchaputa tala mudhar sātru Beddhābarana

thuchchamaru tālavarai sottralodu - uchchitamāi

nūttrettu bedamula dendrukkund tālatthai

Aāttraperu nooladanu lāi

181 - Pancha marabu

According to this verse from Pancha marabouthere are 108 talas with bedas which starts from Chachchaputa and ends in Beddhābaranam.

#### **Pancha tala**

That thand dhim thonda mena thāndavanj seikindra sabai

Atharmuga maidinidai māmaraiye - Urgattitham

Sambaththu vettamudan shatpitha puththrikam

Chachchaputachā chaputa mām

182 - Pancha marabu

In the above verse Pancha marabu explains the five talas, Pancha talas from urgattitham, Sambathuvettam, Shatpitaputrikam, Chachchaputa and chāchaputa originated from the jathis “That, thand, dhim, thon” of the tāndavam of Shiva Nataraja in Sabai (kanaka sabai). It also says the five talas starts from chachchaputa.

“chachchaputa mādhi sāttrumo raindhinume”

#### **Texts and Pancha talas**

The texts which speaks about Pancha talas are Pancha marabu, Bharatha Sangraham, Tala Samudhram, Nandhi vadya, Aādhi bhāratham, Tala Deepika, Bharadārnavam, Sangita Chandrikai, Tala Sumudhram, Natanādhi Vādyaranjanam, Talakkali Venba, Chachchaputa venba and Sangita Ratnakara. In all the above a little differentiation is seen in between them with respect to Pancha tala.

## 1. Chachchaputa

This is the first tala in 108 tala and Pancha tala. It is said that it emerged from the face of Siva. The symbol of the tala Chachchaputa is 8 8 1 8<sup>1</sup> (guru + guru + lagu + Pluta). The angas of this tala are two gurus and one lagu and one pluta (three angas). As the lagu has a count of five the total count of this tala is 33 ( $8 + 8 + 5 + 12 = 33$ ) and 32 if it is a chatusra lagu. But Sangita Ratnakara explains this tala as 8 + 8 + 4 + 8 (guru + guru + lagu + guru) with a total of 24. In Sangita Chandrikai and Tala Deepika this tala is mentioned as Aadhi may be because of first tala among 108. In Pancha marabu, Batratha Sagraham and Tala Samudhram it is mentioned as Chachchaputam. In Natanādhi Vādyaranjanam, Bharadārnava, Aādhibhāratham it is mentioned as chachchaputam. Baratha sastram mentions as Chachcharputam.

## 2. Chāchatputa

This is the second tala of 108 tala and Pancha tala and it emerged from the face of Siva. The symbol of the tala Chāchatputa is 8 1 1 8 (guru + lagu + lagu + guru). The angas of this tala are two gurus and two lagus (two angas). The total count of the tala is 26 if it is kantalagu ( $8 + 5 + 5 + 8 = 26$ ) and 24 if it is a chatusra lagu. In Pancha marabu, Batratha Sagraham and Tala Samudhram it is mentioned as Chāchatputam. In Natanādhi Vādyaranjanam it is mentioned as Chāchatputam. In Bharadārnava, Aādhi bhāratham it is mentioned as chāchaputa. In Sangita Chandrikai it is mentioned as Thrimurththika. In Tala Deepika it is mentioned as Tharpanam. Baratha sasrtam mentions as chācharputa.

## 3. Shatpitaputrikam

This is the third tala of 108 tala and Pancha tala and it emerged from the face of Siva. The symbol of the tala Chāchatputa is 8<sup>1</sup> 1 8 8 1 8<sup>1</sup> (pluta + lagu + guru + guru + lagu + pluta). The angas of this tala are two gurus and two lagus and two plutas (three angas). The total count of the tala is 50 if it is kanta lagu ( $12 + 5 + 8 + 8 + 5 + 12 = 50$ ) and 48 if it is a chatusra lagu. Pancha marabu mentions as Chatpitha puthiram. Batratha Sagraham and Tala Samudhram mentions as Charpitha. Natanādhi Vādyaranjanam mentions as Chatpithaputhrikam. In Bharadārnava, Aādhi bhāratham it is mentioned as Shatpitaputhraka. In Sangita Chandrikai it is mentioned as Anyamukunda. In Tala Deepika it is mentioned as Charchchari. Barathasastram mentions it as Shatpitha patthrikam.

## 4. Sampathveshtakam

This is the fourth tala of 108 tala and Pancha tala and it emerged from the face of Siva. The symbol of the tala Sampathveshtakam is 8<sup>1</sup> 8 8 8 8<sup>1</sup> (pluta + guru + guru + guru + pluta). The angas of this tala are three gurus and two plutas (two angas). The total count of the tala is 48 ( $12 + 8 + 8 + 8 + 12 = 48$ ). As there is no lagu there is no differentiation in total. Pancha marabu mentions it as Champorgattitham. Batratha Sagraham mentions it as Champorkēttam. Tala Samudhram mentions it as Champakkēttam. Natanādhi Vādyaranjanam mentions as Champathveshtakam. Aādhi bhāratham and Bharadārnava mentions as Champakveshtaka. In Sangita Chandrikai it is mentioned as Vipra. In Tala Deepika it is mentioned as Simhaleela. Baratha sastram mentions it as Sampatthu vettam.

## 5. Udghattitham

This is the fifth tala of 108 tala and Pancha tala and it emerged from the face of Siva. The symbol of the tala Udghattitham is 8 8 8 (guru + guru + guru). The angas of this tala are three gurus (only one anga). The total count of the tala is 24 ( $8 + 8 + 8 = 24$ ). As there is no lagu there is no differentiation in total. Pancha marabu, Baratha Sagraham, Baratha sastram and Tala Samudhram mentions it as Urgattitham. Natanādhi Vādyaranjanam mentions as Uthgattitham. Aādhi bhāratham and Bharadārnava mentions as Uthgattitha. In Sangita Chandrikai it is mentioned as Rathna. In Tala Deepika it is mentioned as Kandarppam.

## Conclusion

- They are the first five talas of 108 talas. As they are five in number they are called Pancha talas.
- They have only combination of three angas lagu, guru and pluta. Urgattitham with one anga (guru), Sambathuvettam (guru and Pluta) and chāchaputa (lagu and guru) has two angas and Chachchaputa and Shatpitaputrikam has three angas (lagu, guru and pluta)
- Sangita Chandrikai and Tala Deepika completely differs with all the texts in their names.
- The angas like kākapadam, anudrutham and drutham are not used.
- Saranga deva in Sangita Ratnakara mentions the five Margi talas and 120 Desi talas. So Pancha tala is mentioned as Marga tala in Sangita Ratnakara.
- Arunagiri nadhar in Bootha Vedhala Vaguppu, one of the Thiru Vaguppu spoke about this Pancha tala.
- Pancha marabu explains this Pancha tala which are originated from the jathis “That, thand, dhim, thon” of the tāndavam of Shiva Nataraja in Sabai in 182nd verse.
- This is an analytical study based on the information already available. A critical evaluation is made with the materials already in use.

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