

# A New Approach to Understanding Rhythm in Indian Music



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By

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*I dedicate this book to my fellow beings, especially during these difficult times, to infuse and evoke hope and optimism in their hearts, and to inspire academic growth through the mesmerizing sound of Indian rhythms.*



# CONTENTS

Acknowledgements .....	viii
Preface .....	xi
Chapter 1 .....	1
An Introduction to Aspects of Indian Music Applied in this Book	
Chapter 2 .....	18
A Bird's Eye View	
Chapter 3 .....	71
The Concept of Rhythm	
Chapter 4 .....	95
Compositions and Composers	
Chapter 5 .....	115
Selected Compositions – their Lyrics, Themes and Meanings	
Chapter 6 .....	144
Application of Graphic Tables to the Selected Compositions	
Chapter 7 .....	236
General Discussion	
Chapter 8 .....	247
Conclusion	
Bibliography .....	249
Index of Terms .....	253

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## PREFACE

This book reflects what I learned about Indian rhythms from my PhD thesis (2018), where I undertook a comparative study of *Vṛtta*-s (i.e., melodic metrical drum strokes) within the framework of rhythms in Karnāṭak music. In this work, I analysed and compared the works of two eminent composers, Irayimman Thampi and Subramania Bhāratīyār of South India. I had always felt the urge to contribute to further knowledge of Indian rhythms, by studying and comparing selected rhythms of Karnāṭak music, with those of another genre, i.e., Hindustānī music. This is the main objective of writing the book.

In my thesis, I used ICT (information communication technology) to present the rhythms of selected compositions of the Karnāṭak music composers mentioned above. This was because, according to the United Nations Millennium SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals, 2030), ICT should be used for supporting and promoting social and educational benefits through low-cost online platforms and software tools (e.g., R libraries). I have applied the same technique of a new, graphic, tabular representation, to analyse and compare selected rhythms of compositions in Hindustānī music too.

This book is an attempt to approach the concept of sustainable development through music, not only in normal times but also in view of the COVID-19 pandemic (2019-2022) and the resulting global lockdown. Music with soothing melodies, lyrics and rhythms, has universal appeal and is therapeutic too in stressful situations.

The tabular informative approach used in this book may also be applied to the study of other forms of traditional music across the world.

**Meera Subramanian 2022**



# CHAPTER 1

## AN INTRODUCTION TO ASPECTS OF INDIAN MUSIC APPLIED IN THIS BOOK

This book discusses the rhythms in different music traditions, in various languages. It also applies colour codes for the graphic tables of the selected compositions, to clarify certain features such as rhythmic structures, notes in a melody, lyrics, alliteration and pauses in verse lines etc.

The following sections enable the reader to appreciate this book better:

### Section A

#### Table of English Transliteration of Indian Syllables used in this book

This book includes sections in languages other than English, i.e., Sanskrit, Tamizh, Malayālam, Maṇipravāḷa, Hindī, Awadhī and Braj – all transliterated into Roman script, some with diacritical marks and others without, to understand the pronunciation of the syllables.

A table of the English transliteration of syllables, occurring in the Indian words used in the selected Indian compositions, is given below:<sup>1</sup>

Indian syllable/syllables	Pronounced like English letter/letters	As in English word/words shown below:
a	a	avail
an	un	under
aṅ	un	jungle
aṅj	nj	engine

---

<sup>1</sup> Modified from Subramanian neé Iyengar 2017, ix-x.

ai	i	ride
au	ow	owl
Ā, ā	a	father
ān	an	ranch ('n' silent)
aiñ/ein	ign	reign
āy	ei	height
aḥ	ahu	a hut
āh	ah	ah
i	i	income
ī	ee	sweet
u	u	put
ū	oo	tool
e	e	elephant
ē	a	ate
ai, ay	i	island
o	o	opinion
Ō, ō	o	over
ñ	n	song
ou	ou	out
oun	oun	pound
ṁ	um	gum
ś	ch	champagne
ah	ah	a hut
k	k	mark
kh	kh	khaki
g	g	give
gh	gh	ghost
ṅ	ng	doing
ṅk	nk	pink
ch	ch	chant
chh	chh	ranch hand
j	j	joy
jh	geh	hedgehog

nya	<b>nya</b>	<b>banyan</b>
ñj	<b>ng</b>	<b>manger</b>
ṭ	<b>t</b>	<b>tub</b>
ṭh	<b>th</b>	<b>light-hearted</b>
ḍ	<b>d</b>	<b>dove</b>
ḍh	<b>dh</b>	<b>red-hot</b>
ṇ	<b>n</b>	<b>grand</b>
t	<b>th</b>	<b>path</b>
th	<b>th</b>	<b>thing</b>
d	<b>d</b>	<b>the</b>
dh	<b>dh</b>	<b>dhobi/bandh</b>
n	<b>n</b>	<b>number</b>
p	<b>p</b>	<b>put</b>
ph	<b>ph</b>	<b>up hill</b>
b	<b>b</b>	<b>bun</b>
bh	<b>bh</b>	<b>rub hard</b>
m	<b>m</b>	<b>mug</b>
y	<b>y</b>	<b>yoke</b>
r	<b>r</b>	<b>run</b>
ṛ	<b>r</b>	<b>wrist</b>
ṛ	<b>rr</b>	<b>marry</b>
l	<b>l</b>	<b>look</b>
v	<b>v</b>	<b>village</b>
Ś, ś	<b>ch</b>	<b>champagne</b>
ṣ	<b>sh</b>	<b>washbasin</b>
s	<b>s</b>	<b>sell</b>
h	<b>h</b>	<b>hat</b>
l̥	<b>l</b>	<b>shoulder</b>
kṣh	<b>ksh</b>	<b>rikshaw</b>
zh	<b>s</b>	<b>casual</b>

## Section B

### A general explanation for the usage of italics and singular/plural terms

- **Terms with italics/without italics:**

**Italicised words:** Words having technical terms in Indian music are presented in the text in italics, starting with a capital letter, e.g., *Rāga*, *Tāḷa*, *Vṛtta*, etc. Also, the lyrics of the selected songs for this book are in italics, as presented in Chapter 5 of this book.

**Non-italicised words**, e.g., names of people, composers, gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon, languages are not in italics in the text, e.g., Tulsīdās, Pārvati, Sanskrit, Tamizh, etc.

The names of treatises on music, various musical forms, and names of instruments are also not in italics but have been depicted with single inverted commas before and after them, e.g., ‘Saṅgītaratnākara’, ‘Bhajan’, ‘Ghaṭam’, etc. These names start with capital letters. Diacritical marks have been applied in these names too to clarify their pronunciation.

- **Terms with singular/plural letters:**

The plural forms of technical terms in Indian music have a hyphen (-) followed by a non-italicized ‘s.’ A few examples have been shown in the table below:

Singular	Plural
<i>Rāgā</i> / <i>Rāg</i>	<i>Rāgā</i> -s/ <i>Rāg</i> -s
<i>Tāḷa</i> / <i>Tāḷ</i>	<i>Tāḷa</i> -s/ <i>Tāḷ</i> -s



## Section C

### Aspects of Indian music covered in this book

- **Indian music genres:**

Two major genres of Indian music are Karnāṭak and Hindustānī, practised in South and North India, respectively. (Please refer to Chapter 3).

- **Languages used in the selected songs:**

The Indian languages covered in the selected songs for this book are Sanskrit, Maṇipravāḷa, Tamizh, Malayāḷam, Hindī, Awadhī and Braj.

Sanskrit, Maṇipravāḷa and Tamizh are ancient Indian languages. Maṇipravāḷa is a combination of two languages, i.e., Sanskrit and any other Dravidian language, e.g., the combination of Sanskrit and Malayāḷam, as seen in Song 2-A, in this book. Tamizh and Malayāḷam are languages spoken in the South Indian states of Tamizhnāḍu and Kēraḷa, respectively. Hindī is spoken in the states of North and Central India. Awadhī and Braj are spoken in the state of Uttar Pradesh in North India.

- **Rhythms in the various types of Indian music and musical forms:**

This book covers Indian rhythms in traditional, folk, classical and popular film music. Topics such as rhythm in film music; rhythm in music as an accompaniment to dance; and rhythms in secular, devotional, patriotic and congregational music have also been discussed.

Also, rhythms in the various musical forms, e.g., ‘Kṛti’ (classical Karnāṭak music); ‘Pada’/ ‘Padam’ (classical Karnāṭak music as an accompaniment to dance); ‘Bhajan’ (congregational music); and ‘Khayāl’ (classical Hindustānī music); etc have been discussed in this book.

## Section D

### Rhythmic features in Karnāṭak and Hindustānī genres of music and their technical terms:

(These features are discussed in detail in Chapter 3)

- ***Tāḷa/Tāl*** is rhythm, pronounced as *Tāḷa* in Karnāṭak music and as *Tāl* in Hindustānī music.
- ***Tāḷa āvartana*** is a rhythmic cycle and applies to all Indian rhythms.
- ***Gati/Naḍai*** is the style or gait in which the rhythm (*Tāḷa/Tāl*) moves.

The gait of a song is pronounced as *Gati* in Hindī and Sanskrit, and as *Naḍai* in Tamizh.

There are many types of gaits, but only three have been used in this book, i.e., the *Tisra*, and *Chaturaśra* gaits and the *Misra chāpu* gait (as similarities in them for the purpose of comparison, can be found in some selected songs in both genres, Karnāṭak and Hindustānī).

**Note:** Please refer to the four different rhythmic groups presented in the introductory tables in Chapter 2.

- **Types of Karnāṭak *Tāḷa*-s depicted in this book:**

Out of the many varieties of Karnāṭak *Tāḷa*-s, the three types of rhythm depicted in this book are:

***Ādi*, *Rūpaka*, and *Misra chāpu Tāḷa*-s.**

*Ādi* and *Rūpaka* are two among the seven ***Sūlādi Sapta Tāḷa*-s** introduced into Karnāṭak classical music by composer Purandara Dāsa. They are very popular in Karnāṭak compositions.

*Misra chāpu Tāḷa* is a folk rhythm, frequently used in Karnāṭak music compositions.

- **Types of Hindustānī *Tāl*-s depicted in this book:**

*Dādrā*, *Kaherawā*, *Ēktāl* and *Rūpak Tāl* are the four varieties of Hindustānī *Tāl*-s depicted in this book. However, there are many other types of Hindustānī *Tāl*-s, which have been discussed in Chapter 3 of this book.

- ***Vṛtta*-s** are a metrical melodic, repetitive pattern of drum strokes within the rhythmic cycle of a *Tāḷa/Tāl*, e.g.

‘ta ki ṭa’, ‘dhā dhin nā’, etc.

*Vṛtta*-s have many varieties. Those mentioned in this book are:

***Eṭṭu aḍi Vṛtta*, *Mūnnu aḍi Vṛtta* and *Ēzhu aḍi Vṛtta*.**

These varieties of *Vṛtta* have been analysed and compared to similar varieties in Hindustānī music.

## Section E

### Explanation of various symbols used in the graphic tables in Chapters 2 and 6

|| is a symbol to indicate the beginning and end of a rhythmic cycle (i.e., *Tāḷa-āvartana*), in Karnāṭak and Hindustānī music compositions.

| is a symbol to indicate the middle point of a rhythmic cycle in *Ādi Tāḷa* of Karnāṭak music.

Symbols used for reckoning rhythms (*Tāḷa*-s/*Tāl*-s):

(X √)

The symbol ‘X’ signifies a beat or clap; the symbol ‘√’ signifies a wave of the palm, in Karnāṭak music.

(X O)

In Hindustāni music, the symbol ‘X’ signifies a beat or clap; the symbol ‘O’ signifies a wave of the hand.

These hand gestures are called *Tāla Kriya-s*, which have been discussed further in Chapter 3.

The **rhythmic structure** with the symbols of these hand gestures has been given at the beginning of each song in the graphic tables, to bring clarity in understanding how to reckon the specific *Tāla/Tāl* of each song.

This aspect can be observed in Hindustānī music, e.g., in *Ēktāl* with a total of 12 counts:

X		O			X
dhin dhin		<u>dhāgē</u>	<u>tirakiṭa</u>	tū	nā
1	2	3	4	5	6
O		X			X
kat tā		<u>dhāgē</u>	<u>tirakiṭa</u>	dhin	nā
7	8	9	10	11	12

The horizontal line on top of the drum stroke syllables, ‘dhāgē tirakiṭa,’ indicates that these syllables are recited at double the speed of the others in this pattern.

## Section F

### The importance of *Rāga*, *Tāla* and *Sāhitya* in Indian compositions:

Indian compositions are a beautiful combination of *Rāga* (melody), *Tāla* (rhythm) and *Sāhitya* (lyrics). When these three aspects are combined appropriately, the composition becomes enjoyable.

**Rāga** is a melodic entity in Indian music consisting of a combination of specific notes (i.e., **Swara-s**), which is appealing to the listener. Among the many melodies, some of the Karnāṭak **Rāga-s** presented in this book are *Ānandabhairavi*, *Śubhapantuvarāḷi*, *Khamās*, etc.

**Rāga** is pronounced as **Rāg** in Hindustānī music. In this book, the Hindustānī **Rāg-s** that have been depicted are *Gārā*, *Yaman*, *Basant-bahār* and *Kalyāṇ*. However, there are many other **Rāg-s** such as *Bilāval*, *Behāg*, *Kāfi*, *Durgā*, etc.

**Rāga-s** are made up of **Swara-s** in a particular combination, and this gives each **Rāga** its unique identity.

**Mēḷa/Thāṭ**: These terms refer to a parent **Rāga** or a *Sampūrṇa Rāga*, as it has all the seven notes of the gamut in the ascending order (i.e., *Ārōhaṇa*) and descending order (i.e., *Avarōhaṇa*) of a scale.

This parent **Rāga** is pronounced as *Mēḷa* or *Mēḷakartā Rāga* in Karnāṭak music, and as *Thāṭ* in Hindustānī music.

A **Janya Rāga** is derived from the parent **Rāga**, e.g., *Rāga Khamās* is derived from the Karnāṭak *Mēḷakartā Rāga*, *Harikāmbhōjī*.

## Section G

### **Swara-s:**

The **Sapta Swara-s** refer to the scale of seven (*Sapta*) notes (**Swara-s**) in Indian music,

i.e., *Ṣaḍja*, *Rṣabha*, *Gāndhāra*, *Madhyama*, *Pañchama*, *Dhaivata* and *Niṣāda*.

These seven **Swara-s** are represented in this order, by the seven solfa or tonic syllables: ‘s r g m p d n’ respectively.

### **Variations in some Swara-s:**

Except for the first note, *Ṣaḍja* ‘s’ and the fifth note, *Pañchama* ‘p,’ (which do not change), the rest of the notes, ‘r, g, m, d, n’ are characterized by

variations, according to the *Rāga*-s in which they occur. These *Swara*-s with variations are pronounced differently in Karnāṭak and Hindustānī music. The *Swara* varieties with their names and symbols (figuring in the selected songs for this book) are listed in the table below:

<b><i>Swara</i> varieties in Karnāṭak music</b>	<b>Equivalent <i>Swara</i> varieties in Hindustānī music</b>	<b>Symbol</b>
<i>Ṣaḍjam</i>	<i>Ṣaḍja</i>	s
<i>Śuddha Rṣabha</i>	<i>Kōmal Rṣabh</i>	r <sub>1</sub>
<i>Chatuśruti Rṣabha</i>	<i>Tīvra Rṣabh</i>	r <sub>2</sub>
<i>Sādhāraṇa Gāndhāra</i>	<i>Kōmal Gāndhār</i>	g <sub>2</sub>
<i>Antara Gāndhāra</i>	<i>Tīvra Gāndhār</i>	g <sub>3</sub>
<i>Śuddha Madhyama</i>	<i>Śuddha Madhyam</i>	m <sub>1</sub>
<i>Prati Madhyama</i>	<i>Tīvra Madhyam</i>	m <sub>2</sub>
<i>Pañchama</i>	<i>Pañcham</i>	p
<i>Śuddha Dhaivata</i>	<i>Kōmal Dhaivat</i>	d <sub>1</sub>
<i>Chatuśruti Dhaivata</i>	<i>Tīvra Dhaivat</i>	d <sub>2</sub>
<i>Kaiśiki Niṣāda</i>	<i>Kōmal Niṣād</i>	n <sub>2</sub>
<i>Kākali Niṣāda</i>	<i>Tīvra Niṣād</i>	n <sub>3</sub>

### ***Ārōhaṇa/Ārōhaṇ***

The Sanskrit term ***Ārōhaṇa*** (pronounced in Hindi as ***Ārōhaṇ***) denotes an ascending order of notes (*Swara*-s) in a *Rāga*.

The Sanskrit term ***Avarōhaṇa*** (pronounced in Hindi as ***Avarōhaṇ***) denotes the descending order of the notes (*Swara*-s) in a *Rāga*.

- ***Sthāyī***, the Sanskrit term has two meanings:

- 1) In Hindustānī music, a ***Sthāyī*** is the first section of a composition.

- 2) In both Karnāṭak and Hindustānī music, a ***Sthāyī*** also means a scale, octave or register of the 7 notes (***Swara-s***) such as:

‘s r g m p d n’ (i.e., *Ṣaḍja*, *Rṣabha*, *Gāndhāra*, *Madhyama*, *Pañchama*, *Dhaivata* and *Niṣāda*), in that order, respectively.

Out of the five types of ***Sthāyī-s***, three varieties have been used for singing the selected compositions in this book, namely, ***Mandra***, ***Madhya*** and ***Tāra-sthāyī-s***. These three ***Sthāyī-s*** are in the lower, middle and higher octaves/pitch, respectively, depending on the nature of melody in the selected compositions.

***Mandra-sthāyī Swara-s*** sung in the lower pitch, are denoted by one dot below each note (*Swara*), e.g., ‘ṛ ṇ ḍ p’.

***Madhya-sthāyī Swara-s*** sung in the middle pitch, have no dots either below or above all the 7 *Swara-s*,

for example, ‘s r g m p d n’.

Most of the ***Swara-s*** in the graphic tables are sung in the ***Madhya-sthāyī*** octave.

***Tāra-sthāyī Swara-s*** sung in the higher pitch, are denoted by one dot above each note (*Swara*), e.g., ‘ṣ ṛ ḡ ṁ’.

- The horizontal line on top of two or more *Swara-s* in a composition signifies that these notes are sung together at a speed that is double the original speed of the composition, as seen below in the graphic table of Song 1-A.

Verse-1			SONG 1-A (contd.)			'Śrīmadanantapurattil vāzhum'		
ta	ki	ta	ta	ki	ta	ta	ki	ta
p	n	d	p	p	pm	p	ś	ś
śrī	mad	a	nañ	ta	pu	rat	til	vā

- Rasa*** literally means juice or essence. It is the aesthetic delight that is experienced while listening to a *Rāga*. There are nine *Rasa-s* (i.e., the *Navarasa-s*). Some of the *Rasa-s* evoked in the selected

songs of this book are *Śṛṅgāra* (love), *Hāsyā* (joy), *Vīra* (courage), *Bhakti* (devotion), etc.

- ***Bhāva*** is a feeling or emotion underlying a *Rāga*. *Rasa* and *Bhāva* are complementary. When a particular *Bhāva* is evoked by the performer through his/her actions, the corresponding *Rasa* is experienced by the listener or audience.
- Alliteration or ***Prāsa*** (rhyming syllables in the verse lines of compositions) has been explained in detail in the graphic tables in Chapters 2 and 6. *Prāsa* has many varieties such as *Prathamākshara*, *Dvitiyākshara*, *Anuprāsa*, etc.
- ***Eḍuppu/Grah***: The particular point or place where the music and lyrics of a composition start in a rhythmic cycle (i.e., *Tāḷa Āvartana*), is pronounced as ***Eḍuppu*** in Karnāṭak music and as ***Grah*** in Hindustānī music.

There are three varieties of *Eḍuppu/Grah* – ***Sama/Sam***, ***Aṭṭa/Aṭṭ*** and ***Anāgata/Anāgat***, in both these genres of music.

In this book, only the ***Sama/Sam*** and ***Anāgata/Anāgat*** varieties have been depicted in graphic tables of compositions in Chapters 2 and 6.

***Sama/Sam***: When the music starts and synchronises along with the starting point of the rhythm (*Tāḷa/Tāl*), then it is in the ***Sama/Sam*** position (i.e., ***Eḍuppu/Grah***).

***Anāgata/Anāgat Grah*** occurs when the music and the lyrics start after the starting point of the rhythm (*Tāḷa/Tāl*).

- ***Iḍam***: In Karnāṭak music the Tamizh term, ***Iḍam*** refers to a specific starting point of the lyrics and music, at the beginning of the *Tāḷa* cycle (i.e., at ***Sama iḍam***), or after this cycle begins.

***Iḍam***, after the starting of the *Tāḷa* cycle, has many varieties, some of which have been depicted in this book, e.g:



**Eḍuppu: Kāl iḍam taḷḷi** means that the starting point of the lyrics is after a quarter of a beat. Here the term, **taḷḷi**, means ‘occurring after a gap or an interval.’

**Eḍuppu: Ara iḍam/Ara iḍam taḷḷi** means that the starting point of the lyrics occurs after half of a beat.

**Eḍuppu: Mukkāl iḍam taḷḷi** means the starting point of the lyrics occurs after three-quarters of a beat.

- **Laya** is a Sanskrit term referring to the tempo/speed or the time interval between two counting units of a *Tāḷa kriyā* or a gesture.

The three kinds of **Laya-s** in Indian compositions are:

1) **Vilambita Kāla/Vilambit Kāl**

A slow tempo/speed is pronounced as **Vilambita Kāla** in Karnāṭak music and **Vilambit Kāl** in Hindustānī music.

2) **Madhyama Kāla/Madhyam Kāl**

A medium tempo/speed is pronounced as **Madhyama Kāla** in Karnāṭak music and **Madhyam Kāl** in Hindustānī music.

3) **Druta Kāla/Drut Kāl**

A fast tempo/speed is pronounced as **Druta Kāla** in Karnāṭak music and **Drut Kāl** in Hindustānī music.

- **Oru Kalai:**

This Tamizh term is used in Karnāṭak music to depict a rhythm (*Tāḷa*) in medium tempo.

- **Sollukaṭṭu** and **Bōl/Thēka** are terms used for depicting meaningless drum stroke syllables applied in Karnāṭak and Hindustānī music, respectively.

E.g. of **Sollukaṭṭu**: ‘ta ki ṭa      ta ka      dhi mi’

E.g. of *Bōl*: ‘ti ti nā dhi nā dhi nā’

## Section H

- The colour scheme employed to give clarity to the graphic tables in the ICT format:

Background colours have been used in each composition to clarify these aspects:<sup>2</sup>

- 1) Rhythms (*Tāḷa-s/Tāl-s*) and the *Vṛtta-s* or melodic metrical drum strokes within the rhythmic cycle (*Tāḷa Āvartana*) are shown below:

A light-brown coloured background has been given for *Ādi Tāḷa*, *Tiśra Gati/Naḍai* in Karnāṭak music, e.g., Songs 1-A, 1-B and 1-D, as seen below:

ta ki ṭa	ta ki ṭa	ta ki ṭa	ta ki ṭa
X	1	2	3
ta ki ṭa	ta ki ṭa	ta ki ṭa	ta ki ṭa

To illustrate the variations of the drum strokes in the gait, i.e., *Tiśra Gati/Naḍai*, a yellow background and an orange background have also been added, only in Verse-2 of Song 1-A, a sample of which is illustrated below:

ta ki ṭa	ta dhīm -	- - ta	dhin gi na
taka dhīm taka	taka dhīm taka	taka dhīm taka	taka dhīm taka

The drum stroke ‘tōm’, followed by red-coloured dashes (- -) indicating a pause, in various durations, is also another way of expressing a gait, (i.e., ‘ta ki ṭa’), as can be seen in Songs 1-A, 1-B and 1-D in the *Tiśra Gati/Naḍai*.

This light-brown background has also been used for a similar rhythm, in the gait, *Tiśra Gati*, i.e., the *Dādrā Tāl* in Hindustānī music, as can be seen in Song 1-C:

dhā dhi nā	nā ti nā
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<sup>2</sup> Modified from Subramanian neé Iyengar 2017, 151-152.

- 2) A blue-coloured background is given for the other *Tāḷa-s/Tāl-s*, e.g.,

*Ādi Tāḷa, Chaturaśra Gati /Naḍai* in Karnāṭak music, as perceived in Songs 2-A and 2-B:

|| ta ka dhi mi      ta ka dhi mi      ta ka dhi mi      ta ka dhi mi ||

| ta ka dhi mi      ta ka dhi mi      ta ka dhi mi      ta ka dhi mi ||

The blue background has also been applied for a similar rhythm, i.e., *Kaherawā Tāl, Chaturaśra Gati* in Hindustāni music, as depicted in Song 2-C:

|| dhā gē nā tī      nā ka dhi nā ||

Another type of rhythm, i.e., *Rūpaka Tāḷa, Chaturaśra Gati/Naḍai* in Karnāṭak music, has also been given this blue-coloured background, as depicted in Songs 3-A and 3-B:

|| ta      ka      ta      ka      dhi      mi ||

This blue background has also been given for a similar rhythm, i.e., *Ēktāl, Chaturaśra Gati* in Hindustāni music, as seen in Song 3-C:

|| dhin    dhin      dhāgē    tirakiṭa      tūn      nā

kat      tā      dhāgē    tirakiṭa      dhin      nā ||

The lines on top of certain drum stroke syllables, like dhāgē tirakiṭa indicate that these syllables have to be recited at a faster, double speed, as compared to the speed of the rest of the syllables in this particular *Tāl*.

There are other rhythms in a blue-coloured background, such as the *Miśra chāpu Tāḷa* of Karnāṭak music, as seen in the Songs 4-A and 4-B:

|| ta    ki    ṭa      ta    ka      dhi    mi ||

A similar rhythm in the *Rūpak Tāl* of Hindustānī music has been depicted with the blue background in Song 4-C:

	ti	ti	nā	dhi	nā	dhi	nā	
--	----	----	----	-----	----	-----	----	--

- The **Swara-s**: A green-coloured background has been used for depicting the *Swara-s* (musical notes in solfa letters, i.e., ‘s r g m p d n’) corresponding to the lyrics in the line immediately below the *Swara* line.
- **Sāhitya** (lyrics): A white background is used in the graphic tables, for the *Sāhitya*, i.e., a line of a verse in the chosen composition. (The syllables of the words are split according to the corresponding notes in the line immediately above them (with a green background). These syllables must be sung accordingly).
- **Yati**: This is a pause or caesura in the verse lines of compositions, in various durations. The *Yati* is represented in the graphic tables with red-coloured dashes, i.e., symbol (- -) in variable durations in the line for the lyrics, with a white background.

The *Yati* is also illustrated with corresponding commas, i.e., the symbol (, ,) in variable durations, as shown in the green-coloured line (immediately above the line for the lyrics), in the graphic tables.

The *Vṛtta* variety for each selected composition is presented in the graphic tables, with a pale-green background, along with its explanation in letters with red-coloured print, e.g., as seen in Song 2-A.

***Vṛtta: Eṭṭu-aḍi, a pattern of total 8 beats or aḍi, in a time cycle, with each beat having a value of 4 counts.***

## Section-I

- **Colour code for *Prāsa-s*** (i.e., alliterations)

Different colours have been used in the graphic tables for identifying the various types of alliterations or rhyming letters/syllables/words, (i.e., *Prāsa-s*) utilized by the composers, in the selected compositions, e.g.,

- the *Prathamākshara prāsa/Ādiyākshara prāsa/Prathamākshar prās/Mōnai/Mōna*, is depicted with **red-coloured letters**.
- the *Dvitiyākshara prāsa/Dvitiyākshar prās/Etukai/Etuka*, is represented with **orange-coloured letters**.
- the *Anuprāsa/Anuprāsam/Anuprās*, is illustrated with **green-coloured letters**, and
- the *Antyaprāsa/Antyaprās/Iyaibu*, is represented with **blue-coloured letters**.

## CHAPTER 2

### A BIRD’S EYE VIEW

On a hot summer day in June 2020, as I was sitting on my veranda, amidst a lacklustre silence, a sudden rainy spell emerged with the welcoming gush of a cool, bracing breeze. As it drizzled, I imagined hearing sounds like rhythmic drum strokes ‘ta ki ṭa’, ‘ta ka dhi mi’, ‘dhā dhi nā’, ‘nā tin nā’, etc. in the movements of nature around me. My body spontaneously swished and swayed in harmony, like the trees around me, inspiring me to clap joyfully and sing ... reminding me of the rhythms of familiar old Indian songs that I know resemble these natural drum strokes, and a recently composed one on the COVID-19 pandemic, accompanied by an enchanting dance which I saw on YouTube.<sup>1</sup>

Stimulated, I started singing and dancing to the lilting folk tune and rhythm of ‘Kummiyaḍi’<sup>2</sup>

*Kummiyaḍi Tamizhnāḍu muzhudum*

*kulungiḍak kaikoṭṭik kummiyaḍi...*

...imagining that I was accompanying the ladies of Tamizh Land celebrating their freedom, singing joyously while moving in a circle, to the chorus of:

“Dance the ‘Kummi’, beat the measure!”

Immediately another ‘Kummi’ folk song in Malayāḷam gripped my mood... ‘Śrīmadanantapurattil vāzhum’.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Laxmi Paris, “HUMANS VS CORONA Odi Poyidu Coronave,” accessed from Youtube, May 15, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Subramanian neē Iyengar 2017, 85.

<sup>3</sup> Subramanian neē Iyengar 2017, 80-81.