Korvais in Karnatak Music - Improvisation through Training

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OPEN ACCESS

Manuscript ID:
ASH-2024-12028123

Volume: 12

Issue: 2

Month: October

Year: 2024

P-ISSN: 2321-788X

E-ISSN: 2582-0397

Received: 05.08.2024

Accepted: 16.09.2024

Published Online: 01.10.2024

Citation:
Balaji, J. "Korvais in Karnatak Music – Improvisation through Training." *Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2024, pp. 55-67.

DOI:
https://doi.org/10.34293/sijash.v12i2.8123

Abstract
Korvai is a Tamil word meaning joining or beading. When rhythmic syllables are joined or beaded together in a logical development and culminate in a structural format of definable Purvanga and Uttaranga then they can be termed as Korvai. Korvais form an essential part of every Karnatak concert. They are being extensively used by Vocalists, Instrumentalists and various types of percussion artistes also. Since, Korvai is an integral and important aspect of a concert, there is a necessity to analyze the process of making them and also quantify them for easier approaches to its various types. There are two parts in a Korvai, that are generally being used to identify them distinctively. They are Purvanga (the first part or the introductory part) and Uttaranga (the ending part or the subsequent part). The purvanga and uttaranga are constant factors irrespective of the rhythmic structure or Tala structure. Same Purvanga can be used with different Uttarangas for same tala or extended to other talas as well. Such being the case, the purvangas and uttarangas are clearly quantifiable in terms of numbers and rhythmic phrases or combination of phrases. When a number is being used, there can be logical build up and hence this article explores such logical build-up using numbers in a structured way converted as cognizable rhythmic varieties. Talas are cyclical in nature having specified fixed number of beats per cycle. For a tala which is having 9 beats per cycle, the total number for 3 or 4 cycles can be calculated by simple multiplication. For example, for 4 cycles the total would be 36 beats. Whenever calculations are made mostly they are done on either as number of beats or on pulses. Both methods can be employed for quick results. In the above case, there were 36 beats which can give us 144 pulses (36 X 4).The purvanga can be anything like 108 and the uttaranga can be 36. The general ratio of purvanga and uttaranga could be 60:40 or 70:30 for. Longer Purvangas of 90:10 or shorter purvangas of 20:80 are generally not preferred. This article also covers various examples where different combinations are improvised. Different types of korvais can also be made using such improvisations.

Keywords: Mridangam, Laya, Tala, Karnatak Laya, Carnatic Laya, Carnatic Tala, South Indian Percussion, South Indian Rhythm, Korvai, Muktayee, Improvisation

Introduction

A Korvai is an integral part of any Karnatak Music. Korvai is a tamil word meaning 'joining' or 'beading'. The rhythmic syllables are aesthetically joined in a definable structure comprising of purvanga and uttaranga which seamlessly merge to form a cadential form called Korvai. Both can be definitely split as numbers and the general ratio of purvanga and uttaranga would be between the range of 30:70 or 70:30. Low purvanga ratio of 10 or 20 doesn't really build up into a cognizable korvai, also a low uttaranga ratio of 10 or 20 will not correspond well to the value of Purvanga. Hence, it is desirable to have a balanced purvanga-uttaranga ratio, which has been followed by masters of this art.

When the term 'Korvai' is used it means that it has been logically developed and the phrase of purvanga is introduced, developed and improvised. This is normally done by using melodic phrases as cushion and purvanga phrase interspersed along with them.

When a similar idea (korvai idea) is played after Mohara[1] then it is called Muktayi as there has been no building up of purvanga phrase through a process of introduction, development and improvisation. Strictly speaking the process of building up, stage by stage and culminating in a definite structure containing cognizable purvanga and uttaranga, can alone be termed as a korvai in technical parlance, according to various experts. After mohara, the rhythmic idea that is being executed which resembles a korvai and having all the qualities and technicalities of a korvai, is normally termed as a Muktayi.[2] It is collectively called 'Mohara-Muktayi'. A korvai is normally played 3 times with or without improvisation, on every repetition. The muktayi which is played after a Mohara can also be developed as a korvai if the rules of the korvai are followed viz., introduction, development, improvisation and execution.

Improvisation

Improvisation happens where all the parameters are available and the playing field is already well known. The difference between creativity and improvisation is that the former is an original work of art and the latter is an idea culled out of the original to be improved and improvised further. Most of the times creativity is overshadowed by the variety provided by aesthetic improvisation and sometimes both are mistakenly interpreted and used interchangeably, while both have clear distinctions.

The improvisation can occur on the spot during a concert, after undergoing the rigors of training or can occur while rehearsing or practicing at home. Whatever may be the case, an improvisation stands as an extended idea of the original. Sometimes, the improvised version is much better than the original due to enhancement of the aesthetic value and embellishment on the structure of the original version.

1 Mohara is a rhythmic idea having a pre-defined structure normally played for 4 cycles of a Tala at the end of a Percussion solo. It is also confirmed with Dr.B.M.Sundaram that it should be pronounced as Mohara and not Mora as preferred by some musicians. Also refer to Annexure 2 for Glossary of Technical Terms.

2 As orally expressed by Dr.B.M.Sundaram during one of the exclusive conversations with him.

The purpose of this article is to 'train to improvise'. It doesn't mean that creativity stops when you are trained improvise, but actually it improves methods by which one can create original masterpieces. Training and preparation are the foundations for doing impromptu improvisations. It can work well only when the training is exhaustive and the preparation is un-compromising. The effect that this author has found in such a training is vast and provides unlimited scope for constant improvisations. The results are stunning and motivating the artistes to explore and innovate more. It has been found that spontaneity is the striking factor in an improvisation, which occurs only when the training and preparations are exhaustive, all the while keeping the idioms intact. It doesn't mean that the training doesn't lead to create original work of art. When the training is exhaustive and all encompassing then creativity and improvisations occur simultaneously and overlap each other in an aesthetic blend.

The Training Process

Basically, the system works well with play of numbers but at later stages they work well with ideas as a whole or as part. After learning the basics of rhythm like representing numbers with phrases (given below) there are a number of steps which have to be followed for a complete training process essential for improvisations.

The below table is only basic in nature and gives a clue to representation of various numbers in rhythmic format.

After learning to render the jatis[3] (Balaji: Rhythmic Syllables) for different numbers it is imperative to learn to place them in Talas. All students of music are taught Trikaala[4] of a rhythmic phrase or even the talas themselves. The talas are basically represented in rhythmic phrases or musical notes. Rendering a Tala themselves as Trikaala is one method to understand rhythmic variations while it is necessary to render Trikaala of the numbers expressed above at least from 3 onwards till 10.

3 Jati is rhythmic syllable.

4 Rendition of a rhythmic phrase in 3 speeds for a particular tala, extendable to other talas

Numbers	Rhythmic Representations	Vocalised as	Gaps or kaarvai representations
1	Ta	Tha	.
2	Ta ka	Tha Ka	Tm .
3	Ta ki ta	Tha ki ta	Taangu or t n g
4	Ta ka di mi	Tha ka di mi	T . . .
5	Ta di gi na tm	Tha di gi na thom	Tm . t n g
6	Ta ka ta ka di mi	Tha ka tha ka di mi	T n g - t n g
7	Ta ki ta ta ka di mi	Tha ki ta tha ka di mi	T . . . t n g
8	Ta ka di mi ta ka jo nu	Tha ka di mi tha ka jo nu	T . . . d . . .
9	Ta aka di mi ta di gi na tm	Tha ka di mi tha di gi na thom	T n g - t n g - t n g
10	Ta ki ta tm . ta di gi na tm	Tha ki ta thom . tha di gi na thom	Tm . t n g - Tm . t n g

Trikaala of Few Numbers

For example, to do Trikaala for a number 5 the total number of beats can be calculated by multiplying it with 3 and the result is 15 (Balaji: *A Practical Guide to South Indian Rhythm through Konnakkol*). Find the 15th beat in a Tala by the method of counting the numbers in reverse (Iyer) for a particular tala. For example, in Khanda Jaati Triputa Tala (Annexure 1) there are 9 beats per cycle and hence the number 15 cannot fit in within one cycle of a Tala. In such cases the tala has to be counted from 18 (total count for two cycles) until the point 15 is reached to successfully render Trikaala of 5 from that point onwards till the Tala completes the cycle.

Example 1

Tala: Khanda Jaati Triputa Tala - 9 beats per cycle
Leave 3 beats take off point from the 4th beat
Trikaala Rendition

First Speed (once)	T ... d ... g ... n ... tm ...
Second Speed (Twice)	t . d . g . n . tm . - t . d . g . n . tm .
Third Speed (Four times)	t d g n tm - t d g n tm - t d g n tm - t d g n tm //

Above example is only tip of the iceberg for one number. For other numbers the same method has to be followed as per Jati legend given for various numbers on prepage. One more example for 7 is given here for Misra Jaati[5] Jhampa Tala, with a structure of a Laghu (a beat and 6 finger counts), Anudruta (a beat) and Druta (a beat and a wave), having a total count of 10 per cycle. As it has been mentioned earlier for Trikaala the number in question should be multiplied with 3 and hence for 7 the Trikaala will span 21 beats. Finding 21 in Misra Jaati Jhampa Tala is easy since it has 10 beats per cycle. So, two cycles and one additional beat would result in identifying the place for 21. Leave 9 beats from the beginning and from the 10th beat onwards render Trikaala of 7 in Misra Jaati Jhampa Tala to return to the starting point of the Tala.

Example 2

Tala: Misra Jaati Jhampa Tala - 10 beats Per cycle
Leave 9 beats take off point from the 10th beat
Trikaala Rendition

First Speed (once)	T ... k ... t ... t ... k ... d ... m ...
Second Speed (Twice)	t . k . t . t . k . d . m . -t . k . t . t . k . d . m .
Third Speed (Four times)	tkt tkdm- tkt tkdm - tkt tkdm - tkt tkdm //

Generally, in a concert scenario the ending is not rendered 4 times of a Jaati. It is done thrice only. Hence the above template has to be modified as follows:

First Speed - once
Second Speed - Twice
Third Speed - Thrice

In order to get this idea in a Tala it would be evident that one of the third speeds has to be removed from the rendition and has to be left as a gap in the beginning or alternatively render 3rd speed phrase

5 Jati is Rhythmic Syllable and Jaati is finger counts factor for a tala. 5 Jaatis viz Tisra (3), Catusra (4), Khanda (5), Misra (7) and Sankirna (9) are provided for various talas identifiable by the word 'jaati' as part of Tala nomenclature

once in the beginning and render the Trikaala to reach back to the starting point of the tala. This exercise is being exclusively taught in the name of 'Jati Alankara' by this author to all the students. This has to be done for all the 35 talas in the Suladi Sapta Tala Scheme. The format followed in basic structure as A1-(first speed); B1 – B2 (second speed); C1 – C2 – C3 – C4 (third speed). The revised format for rendering 3rd speed three times would be to shift C4 to the beginning ie., before A1 and render the Trikaala.

This is one of the most valuable exercises with which mastery of numbers and their representative jatis can be achieved in a considerable time.

Rendering Series of Jatis

Next step is to render Jatis as a continuous series of, say 3 times, 6 times or 9 times with or without gap between them. When the jatis are rendered 3 times (say 5 5 5 as tdgntm - tdgntm - tdgntm etc) the gaps will be given between each of the phrases and there will not be any gap after the 3rdphrase is rendered. If the Jatis are rendered 6 times the grouping is normally aa, bb, cc or a, ab, bcc and the gaps between them are adjusted accordingly. If the Jatis are to be rendered 9 times then the grouping is aaa, bbb, ccc and the gaps are given after each group and as already mentioned, there will not be any gap after the last group has been rendered.

Series (thrice) examples

If a student or artiste wants to render a series of Jatis say 5 5 5 or 6 6 6 etc then it can be immediately calculated by multiplying the number with 3. For 5 the total will be 15 and for 6 the total will be 18 and so on and so forth for other numbers as well. If the format is 'a a a' then the kaarvai or gap can be 'k'. The format would then be a (k) a(k) a//. As 'a' can be varied 'k' also can be varied. For example, if one wants to render /t d g n tm/ three times with 3 gaps then the calculation can be made as 3 * 5 + 2 * 3 bringing the total to 21.

For Adi tala (most common tala having 8 beats or 32 pulses per cycle) the calculation of the position of 21 can be made easily by leaving 11 pulses from the beginning (4 pulses per beat). After 11 pulses have been rendered either as gap or filled-up phrases the series has to be rendered.

3	**0**	**Off**	**1**	**Off**	**2**	**Off**	**3**	**Off**	**4**	**Off**	**5**	**Off**	**6**	**Off**	**7**	**Off**	**8**	**Off**	**9**	**Off**	**10**	**Off**
5	15	**17**	17	**15**	19	**13**	21	**11**	23	**9**	25	**7**	27	**5**	29	**3**	31	**1**	33	**31**	35	**29**
6	18	**14**	20	**12**	22	**10**	24	**8**	26	**6**	28	**4**	30	**2**	32	**0**	34	**30**	36	**28**	38	**26**
7	21	**11**	23	**9**	25	**7**	27	**5**	29	**3**	31	**1**	33	**31**	35	**29**	37	**27**	39	**25**	41	**23**
8	24	**8**	26	**6**	28	**4**	30	**2**	32	**0**	34	**30**	36	**28**	38	**26**	40	**24**	42	**22**	44	**20**
9	27	**5**	29	**3**	31	**1**	33	**31**	35	**29**	37	**27**	39	**25**	41	**23**	43	**21**	45	**19**	47	**17**
10	30	**2**	32	**0**	34	**30**	36	**28**	38	**26**	40	**24**	42	**22**	44	**20**	46	**18**	48	**16**	50	**14**

The following table gives total for the series with offsets also. The offset is nothing but the number of syllables that have to be left from the start of the tala and then the pattern has to be rendered as part of series of numbers. The Horizontal row containing 0,1,2 …10 are the value of 'k' to be rendered between the patterns in the format of a(k)a(k)a//. The 'off' column in the following table signifies the number of maatras kaarvai or filled-up phrases to be given from the start of the tala before the actual pattern in the format of a(k)a(k)a is rendered. The 'off' value has another purpose which will be discussed later in this article.

For example, for rendering a=7 and k=5 the total would be 31 and the offset will be 1. For Adi Tala the total pulses per cycle is 32 (8 beats * 4 pulses per beat). Hence, leaving ¼ at the starting point and rendering the 7(5)7(5)7// should bring back to the starting point of the tala. This is given in the following table.

Beat	**Little finger**	**Ring finger**	**Middle finger**	**Beat**	**Wave**	**Beat**	**Wave**
. T k t	T k d m	T . . .	. t k t	T k d m	T . . .	. t k t	T k d m // (tha)

The above table renders the a=7 and k=5 in the format of a(k)a(k)a//. After the rendition is complete it is customary to end it with some syllables like 'tha' or 'thom' or 'thaam'. These ending syllables

will always coincide with the 1st beat of the tala and are not to be counted as part of series while making calculations.

Series (Thrice) Exercise

As an exercise one may try the following:

a) a = 6 and k = 7
b) a = 5 and k = 9
c) a = 9 and k = 8
d) a = 10 and k = 6

The above examples are basic in nature and it is imperative to recite the entire series in a logical way starting with value of 'a' as 5 and value of 'k' as 0 to 10. Then continue to render the next series with value of 'a' as 6 and value of 'k' as 0 to 10 and so on and so forth for other numbers as well where, value of 'a' as 10 and value of 'k' as 10.

Rendering series (six times)

If a student or artiste wants to render a series of Jatis say 55- 55- 55 or 66- 66- 66 etc, then it can be immediately calculated by multiplying the Jati number with 6. For 5 the total will be 30 and for 6 the total will be 36 and so on and so forth for other numbers as well. If the format is 'aa- aa -aa' then the kaarvai or gap can be 'k'. The format would then be aa (k) aa (k) aa//. For example, if the phrase /t d g n tm/ has to be rendered 6 (value of 'a') times with 3 gaps (value of 'k') then the calculation can be made as 6 * 5 + 2 * 3 bringing the total to 36. The offset would be 28. So, after leaving 28 (maatras) or 7 (aksharas) from the starting point of the tala the above can be rendered effectively. The following table gives total for the series with offsets also.

6	**0**	**Off**	**1**	**Off**	**2**	**Off**	**3**	**Off**	**4**	**Off**	**5**	**Off**	**6**	**Off**	**7**	**Off**	**8**	**Off**	**9**	**Off**	**10**	**Off**
5	30	**2**	32	**0**	34	**30**	36	**28**	38	**26**	40	**24**	42	**22**	44	**20**	46	**18**	48	**16**	50	**14**
6	36	**28**	38	**26**	40	**24**	42	**22**	44	**20**	46	**18**	48	**16**	50	**14**	52	**12**	54	**10**	56	**8**
7	42	**22**	44	**20**	46	**18**	48	**16**	50	**14**	52	**12**	54	**10**	56	**8**	58	**6**	60	**4**	62	**2**
8	48	**16**	50	**14**	52	**12**	54	**10**	56	**8**	58	**6**	60	**4**	62	**2**	64	**0**	66	**30**	68	**28**
9	54	**10**	56	**8**	58	**6**	60	**4**	62	**2**	64	**0**	66	**30**	68	**28**	70	**26**	72	**24**	74	**22**
10	60	**4**	62	**2**	64	**0**	66	**30**	68	**28**	70	**26**	72	**24**	74	**22**	76	**20**	78	**18**	80	**16**

For example, for rendering a=5 and k=3 the total value is 36 and the offset is 28. For Adi Tala the total pulses per cycle is 32 (8 beats * 4 pulses per beat). So, leaving 7 beats at the starting point and rendering the 5 5(3) 5 5 (3) 5 5// should bring back to the starting point of the tala. This is given in the following table.

Beat	**Little finger**	**Ring finger**	**Middle finger**	**Beat**	**Wave**	**Beat**	**Wave**
							T d g n
Tm- t d g	N tm- tn .	G/ t d g	N tm- t d	G n tm- tn	. g/ t d	G n tm- t	D g n tm/ (tha)

Series (Six times) Exercise

As an exercise the student may try to explore the following: -

a) a = 6 and k = 5
b) a = 5 and k = 9
c) a = 7 and k = 3
d) a = 9 and k = 6

Rendering Series (Nine times)

If a student or artiste wants to render a series of Jatis say 555- 555- 555 or 666- 666- 666 etc., then it can be immediately calculated by multiplying the number with 9. For 5 the total will be 45 and for 6 the total will be 54 and so on and so forth for other numbers as well. If the format is 'aaa- aaa -aaa' then the kaarvai or gap can be 'k'. The format is aaa (k) aaa (k) aaa//. For example, if one wants to render /t d g n tm/ 9 times with 7 gaps then the calculation can be made as 9 * 5 + 2 * 7 bringing the total to 59. The offset is 5. After leaving 5 (maatras) from the starting point of the tala one can render the above series.

9	0	Off	1	Off	2	Off	3	Off	4	Off	5	Off	6	Off	7	Off	8	Off	9	Off	10	Off
5	45	**19**	47	**17**	49	**15**	51	**13**	53	**11**	55	**9**	57	**7**	59	**5**	61	**3**	63	**1**	65	**31**
6	54	**10**	56	**8**	58	**6**	60	**4**	62	**2**	64	**0**	66	**30**	68	**28**	70	**26**	72	**24**	74	**22**
7	63	**1**	65	**31**	67	**29**	69	**27**	71	**25**	73	**23**	75	**21**	77	**19**	79	**17**	81	**15**	83	**13**
8	72	**24**	74	**22**	76	**20**	78	**18**	80	**16**	82	**14**	84	**12**	86	**10**	88	**8**	90	**6**	92	**4**
9	81	**15**	83	**13**	85	**11**	87	**9**	89	**7**	91	**5**	93	**3**	95	**1**	97	**31**	99	**29**	101	**27**
10	90	**6**	92	**4**	94	**2**	96	**0**	98	**30**	100	**28**	102	**26**	104	**24**	106	**22**	108	**20**	110	**18**

The following table gives total for the series with offsets also.

For example, for rendering a=9 and k=8 the total is 97 and the offset is 31. For Adi Tala the total pulses per cycle is 32 (8 beats * 4 pulses per beat). Leaving 31 pulses or 7-3/4 beats from the starting point and rendering the 9 9 9 (8) 9 9 9 (8) 9 9 9 // brings the rendition back to the starting point of the tala. This is given in the following table.

Beat	Little finger	Ring finger	Middle finger	Beat	Wave	Beat	Wave
							. . . t
K d m t	D g n tm -	T k d m	T d g n	Tm – t k d	M t d g	N tm-t .	. . d .
. . t k	D m t d	G n tm- t	K d m t	D g n tm -	T k d m	T d g n	Tm – t . .
. d . .	. t k d	M t d g	N tm – t k	D m t d	G n tm – t	K d m t	D g n tm // (tha)

Series (Nine times) Exercise

As an exercise the student may try to explore the following:

a) a = 6 and k = 10
b) a = 7 and k = 3
c) a = 8 and k = 7
d) a = 10 and k = 9

Making a Korvai

The previous sections discussed various methods to calculate numbers in terms of Jatis in various different ways. As it has been mentioned earlier that a Korvai has two parts viz., Purvanga and Uttaranga. The ideas discussed so far in previous sections predominantly relate to the second portion of the korvai ie., Uttaranga. In this section, an analysis of purvanga is made in the following few pages.

Making of a Purvanga

Purvanga or uttaranga both are basically numbers and if one has observed the 'off' column in the previous tables, some of them are divisible by 3 and can be made as legitimate Purvangas for creating cognizable korvais in karnatak music. Continue to the next section where a discussion on how to create purvanga with numbers mentioned in the 'off' column.

Purvanga Structure

Purvangas are generally in the following format:

Phrase (gap) phrase (gap) phrase (gap)

At its basic level, purvanga is a number which is divisible by 3. On a close observation it can be seen thatmost of the numbers mentioned in the column 'off' in all the tables mentioned before, are not divisible by 3. Those numbers that are divisible by 3 can be easily done and those numbers that are not divisible by three can be made into a legitimate Purvanga by use of Yatis or by use of ascending or descending patterns containing a minimum of five phrases,with or without gaps.

A Korvai with example of Yati

In the table if the Purvanga value is 20 and Uttaranga value is 76 then a korvai for 3 cycles of Adi Tala can be made as follows: -

Since 20 is not a number that is divisible by 3, a necessary recourse to 'Yati' has to be made. Here, descending Yati is used for 20.

T k d n tm .
T k t tm .
T k tm .
T tm .
Tm .

Then render the uttaranga of 76 of 8 * 9 with 2 gaps in the format of 8 8 8 (2) 8 8 8 (2) 8 8 8 //. This

becomes a korvai in Karnatak Music. The phrase / t tm. t d g n tm/ can be used as a phrase for 8 in this case. This type of descending Yati used in purvanga is called 'Gopuccha Yati'.

The purvanga of 20 can also be rendered as ascending also.

Tm .
T tm .
T k tm .
T k t tm .
T k d n tm .

This type of ascending yati is called 'Srotovaha Yati'.

Improvisation through Grouping

In the above example in uttaranga was 8 8 8 (2) 8 8 8 (2) 8 8 8 // with the phrase as / t tm . t d g n tm/. Actually the phrase is split as 3 (t tm .) and 5 (t d g n tm). Hence, they can be split and grouped to form a different set of phrases, as part of improvisation.

T tm . t tm . t tm . t d g tn tm- t d g n tm - t d g n tm ta.

T tm . t tm . t tm . t d g tn tm- t d g n tm- t d g n tm ta .

T tm . t tm . t tm . t d g tn tm- t d g n tm- t d g n tm // (Tha)

The Idea of 8 8 8 (2) 8 8 8 (2) 8 8 8// has been Improvised as:

3 3 3 5 5 5 (2)
3 3 3 5 5 5 (2)
3 3 3 5 5 5 //

Another Improvisation in Grouping could be as follows:

3 3 3 5 5 5 (2)
3 3 6 6 6 (2)
3 7 7 7 //

Improvisation through Combinations

The same uttaranga of 8 8 8 (2) 8 8 8 (2) 8 8 8 can be made as 7 7 7 (2) 8 8 8 (2) 9 9 9 (2) as an outcome of averages. Combinations of 6 8 10 or 5 8 11 can also be used keeping 8 at the center as a constant value. This adds various combinations and allows on the spot improvisations at later stages on live concerts.

Any number rendered 3 times separately or as a group of 3 can be averaged to give new combinations and give an improvised feel.

Another important part of improvisations could be that, any number rendered 6 times in the format of aa(k) aa(k) aa // can be modified as a(k) aa(k) aaa//. For example, the same 76 as uttaranga has a combination of 10 as value of 'a' and 8 as value of 'k' in the format of 10-10 (8) 10-10 (8) 10 -10// which can be re-grouped as 10(8) 10-10(8) 10-10-10//. Internally the 10 can be split as 3 and 7, or 4 and 6 or 2 and 8. These can be further regrouped and rearranged to give further improvisations.

The process of splitting the phrases and re-grouping the same in various different ways, forms the core of improvisational explorations, possible only through rigorous training.

Purvanga with Numbers Divisible by 3 Various Examples

For 24 there can be 3 * 8 grouped and rendered as 5 and 3, where 5 is the value of 'a' and 3 as value of 'k'. The phrase for 5 in this case could be / t t k d n/ and the phrase for 'k' is /taangu – t n g/ to read as /t t k d n (t n g)- t t k d n (t n g) – t t k d n (t n g)/ and the remaining can be anything from the following numbers take from the above tables where the offset (off)value is 24 which are given below.

S. No	Uttaranga Value	Series Table reference	Value of 'a'	Value of 'k'
1	40	3	8	8
2	40	3	10	5
3	40	6	5	5
4	40	6	6	2
5	72	6	9	9
6	72	6	10	6
7	72	9	6	9
8	72	9	8	0
9	104	9	10	7

All the above can be made as a legitimate korvai. In the above usage of grouping can also be made. Even if the purvanga is divisible by 3 some of the them allow scope for making them as Yatis. The following is an improvisation for 24 in yati format.

T n g
T- t n g
T k- t n g
T k - t n g

T- t n g

T n g

This type of yati is ascending and descending called 'Mridanga Yati'. There is another yati called Damaru yati which has a format of phrases arranged as descending-ascending format. One example can be for number 47 in Damaru yati can be as follows: -

T k d n (t n g)

T k t (t n g)

T k (t n g)

T (t n g)

(t n g)

T (t n g)

T k (t n g)

T k t (t n g)

T k d n (t n g)

The above is a valid Purvanga for 47 where the number is not divisible by 3. In order to fill up Adi tala for various cycles the values are 17 (2 cycles), 49 (3 cycles), 81 (4 cycles) and so on. The values of 17, 49 and 81 are available in various tables that can be substituted to make legitimate korvais.

Purvanga Numbers Non-Divisible by Three

When a purvanga number is not divisible by three, a few options are there to make a legitimate purvanga. One option is to use the Yati. Another option[6] , which is explained herewith.

For example, take a number like 31 which is not divisible by 3 but can be made into a Phrase (gap) phrase (gap) phrase (gap) format of purvanga through the following logic. The method is to subtract the non-divisible number by 7 or 14 or 28 until the number becomes divisible by 3. In the above case, 31 – 7 is 24 which is divisible by 3 and the result is 8.

The next step is to split 7 into 3 portions which accommodates geometric progression of 1,2,4[7]. This number of 1,2,4 can be used as prefixes to the resultant number ie., in this case 8. The structure then becomes 1(8); 2(8); 4(8). On referring to the chart series of 9, there is an off number of 31 which can also be used as a purvanga and uttaranga is already there as 7 into 9 times with 1 as the value of 'k'.

The korvai is as follows:

Purvanga

T(1) – t dm . t t k d n (8)

T k (2) – t dm . t t k d n (8)

T . d . (4)– t dm . t t k d n (8)

Uttaranga

T . d . g n tm – t . d. g n tm – t . d . g n tm (.)

T . d . g n tm – t . d. g n tm – t . d . g n tm (.)

T . d . g n tm – t . d. g n tm – t . d . g n tm// ta

Once again in the above korvai, further improvisations could be made, that would be, instead of 7 * 9 times, there can be 5 * 3 times, 7 * 3 times and 9 * 3 times, keeping the 'k' value constantly as 1.

Further improvisation that uses gati (Annexure 2) in the last segment of 9 * 3, is explained here. The logic here is wherever a number[8] is present 2 times in chstusra gati, then the same number can be rendered 3 times in Tisra Gati, higher speed, ie., double speed of 6 syllables per beat.

In the above case the uttaranga could be improvised as follows:

5 5 5 (1)

7 7 7 (1)

9 (double tisra) 9 9 9// ta

This is how recursive improvisations, ie., improvisations within improvisations are being done in Karnatak Laya.

Proportions for Purvanga and Uttaranga

Too long purvangas and short uttarangas and vice versa should not be used considering the aesthetic value. For example, in series 9 table uttaranga value of 110 for 10 with 10 gaps and offset value of 18 as purvanga should not be used as formation of korvais. There has to be a balance between purvanga and uttaranga which can be in the ratio of 70:30 or 30:70; 60:40 or 40:60. Values of 20:80 or 80:20 and 10:90 or 90:10 are not normally done.

Some Standard Phrases for Purvanga

Some of the standard phrases for purvanga are given below for ready reference. The purvanga or starting point of the Korvai is called 'aasu' and this is developed by playing melodic phrases. The list given below is not exhaustive but only indicative and suggestive. More over the list gives stand-alone

6 Authors own idea

7 The Geometric Progression for 14 is 2,4,8 and for 28 is 4,8,16. Just by prefixing the arrived number with these three numbers a Purvanga can be made

8 Number here refers to the equivalent Jati

phrases which has to be judiciously used as purvanga of korvais.

1. T . d . T k j n (8)
2. T t k d n (5)
3. T t . k t . t k . d m . (12)
4. T r t n k t j n t k t r k t t k (16 pulse phrase to be rendered in 2 beats)
   Vocalized as Tha ri tha Na ki ta jo nu tha ka tha ri ki ta tha ka
5. Dhi . . . tm . k t t k t r k t t k
6. Tm . k t t k t r k t t k
7. T r k t tm . t k t r k t tm . t k d k t r k t tm . (12 pulses)

Usage of these Charts for Various Talas

The charts can be used for various talas as well. Only the offset values will change depending on the tala pulses per cycle. For example, if we take Khanda Jaati Triputa Tala (Annexure 1) there are 36 pulses per cycle and hence the offset value will change accordingly. One example for 3 series with offset values is given in the following table.

3	**0**	**Off**	**1**	**Off**	**2**	**Off**	**3**	**Off**	**4**	**Off**	**5**	**Off**	**6**	**Off**	**7**	**Off**	**8**	**Off**	**9**	**Off**	**10**	**Off**
5	15	**21**	17	**19**	19	**17**	21	**15**	23	**13**	25	**11**	27	**9**	29	**7**	31	**5**	33	**3**	35	**1**
6	18	**18**	20	**16**	22	**14**	24	**12**	26	**10**	28	**8**	30	**6**	32	**4**	34	**2**	36	**0**	38	**34**
7	21	**15**	23	**13**	25	**11**	27	**9**	29	**7**	31	**5**	33	**3**	35	**1**	37	**35**	39	**33**	41	**31**
8	24	**12**	26	**10**	28	**8**	30	**6**	32	**4**	34	**2**	36	**0**	38	**34**	40	**32**	42	**30**	44	**28**
9	27	**9**	29	**7**	31	**5**	33	**3**	35	**1**	37	**35**	39	**33**	41	**31**	43	**29**	45	**27**	47	**25**
10	30	**6**	32	**4**	34	**2**	36	**0**	38	**34**	40	**32**	42	**30**	44	**28**	46	**26**	48	**24**	50	**22**

In the same way, series for 6 and 9 can be made using the above chart with offset values for Khanda Jaati Triputa Tala.

Same principles of korvai making have to be applied for all the talas discussed throughout this article.

Practical Examples using Various Charts Listed Above

Various practical examples have been given below using some of the purvanga and uttaranga patterns for easy exploration and improvisation.

Use of T. D. T k d m

While making korvais the purvanga plays an important part so as the uttaranga. Since purvanga forms the beginning of a Korvai, it has to be bright. Some of the principles which can be applied is the appropriate use a Kaarvai between patterns in the purvanga (neither too long nor too short). Please observe the following Korvai for Adi Tala by using T . D . T k d m.

Purvanga

T . d . t k d m (t n g)
T . d . t k d m (t n g)
T . d . t k d m (t n g)

Uttaranga

T d g n tm (t…d…)
T d g n tm (t…d…)
T d g n tm // tha

The above korvai has a purvanga of 33 and uttaranga of 31. Please refer to chart in the series of 3 where one can find variations for 31 representing Uttaranga.

Variations for 31 with Reference to the Chart

(a) value of ‘a’ is 5 and value of ‘k’ is 8
(b) value of ‘a’ is 7 and value of ‘k’ is 5
(c) value of ‘a’ is 9 and value of ‘k’ is 2

With the chart 3 variations were found which normally is not possible with just getting to learn the art. This is only possible through logical and methodical training which has been brought out in this article step by step.

Variations for 63 with Reference to the Chart

The next number with which uttaranga can be made for Adi Tala is 63 which is 31+32 (adding one more cycle for adi tala). This korvai which has 33 as purvanga and 63 (to be explained with reference to the chart) and the total of this korvai is 96 maatras or 24 aksharas (24 * 4). Normally, korvais are not made for 3 cycles of Adi Tala, as most of the compositions are in 2 kalai (Annexure 2) or twice the beats for each

of the beats in adi tala making the total to 16 instead of 8. If the korvai is made for 96 maatras or 24 aksharas then for 16 akshara Adi Tala 2 kalai, the korvai will land at the mid-point and when the repetition is done thrice (as is the practice for any Korvai) the korvai will not end or coincide with the starting point of the tala and hence odd number cycle korvais are better avoided. But for the sake of example, it has been explored here. Odd number cycle korvais are very useful when the artiste wants to play the entire korvai in different Gati or Nadai change. For example, if a korvai spans 3 cycles in Adi Tala (oru kalai) with 8 beats per cycle the entire korvai can be converted in to Tisra nadai. If the korvai spans for 5 cycles, then it can be converted to Khanda Nadai (as it is without changing either purvanga or uttaranga).

More Variations and Improvisations with T . D . T k d m

Observe the following korvai which uses the reduction logic, popularly known as use of Yati.

Purvanga (41 Maatras)

T . d . t k d n - d . t k d n - t k d n (t n g) - 21 Maatras

D . t k d n – t k d n (t n g) (13 Maatras)

T k d n (t n g) (7 maatras)

Uttaranga (23 Maatras)

T d g n tm (t . . .)

T d g n tm (t . . .)

T d g n tm (//t) Total 64 maatras or 16 Aksharas

The same purvanga can be used for Misra Chaapu Tala while the uttaranga only will vary as given below. The purvanga has 41 maatras and Misra chaapu Tala has multiples of 14 maatras per cycle and hence after 41 there is 1 left for 42 which is divisible by 14. Keep adding a few cycles of 14 say 3 cycles and the total will be 43 (42 + 1 maatra available after rendition of Purvanga). For 43 there can be 9 with 8 gaps in series 3. Increasing the number of Avartas or cycles can result in more scope for using the chart in an effective way, while keeping an eye on the Purvanga-Uttaranga Ratio.

All the purvanga phrases given in the previous section can be used to build a legitimate phrase with different kaarvai (gaps). Yati phrases can also be made using the purvanga list given therein.

Summary

1. A korvai meaning beading or development of phrases fit into a structure
2. A Korvai has a purvanga and uttaranga
3. Improvisations can be made only through proper training in talas
4. 3, 6 and 9 series exercises have to be done rigorously.
5. Understanding of kaarvais or gaps is very important.
6. Reciting trikaala jaatis (various numbers represented by rhythmic phrases)
7. Making korvais with charts
8. Grouping exercises
9. Improvisation within purvanga and uttaranga
10. Application of the charts to various talas.
11. Practical Examples

Conclusion

It is very difficult to explain and discuss korvais within a single article. Even though, this article covers some of the aspects of the art of korvai making it is imperative that rigorous training is an important ingredient for improvisation. Actual performance experience gives an additional advantage to create more korvais. Over the years, improvisation becomes a second nature for the performer due to the fact that the training is complete and comprehensive.

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Annexure 1

Suladi Sapta Talas

There are 7 talas in this scheme (sapta means 7) and each of them have clearly defined structure. The structure doesn't change throughout the rendition of each of the talas but the internal movement changes according to the Jaati variations. In Karnatak Music Talas are openly shown through hand gestures, called kriya or action. Mere actions won't really show the real cyclicity of a tala and hence the makers were smart enough to have different check points. They divided the actions further as 'anga' or parts or limbs of a tala. Parts serve the function of knowing the exact position in a tala and to mentally calculate how many beats are left to reach the starting point or sam of the next cycle. Given below are the basic structures of different talas under the Suladi scheme:

S. No	Name of Tala	Structure of Tala
1	Dhruva Tala	I O I I
2	Matya Tala	I O I
3	Ata Tala	I I O O
4	Triputa Tala	I O O
5	Jhampa Tala	I U O
6	Rupaka Tala	O I
7	Eka Tala	I

'I' is used as the symbol for Laghu or finger counts starting with a beat and a specified number of finger counts depending on Jaati; 'U' is used as the symbol for Anudruta with one beat duration shown by a single beat; 'O' is used as the symbol Druta which is shown by a beat and a wave of palm facing upwards.

Expansion of Suladi Sapta Talas

These seven talas expand to a total number of 35 talas after applying a feature called 'Jaati Variations'. Not only the jaatis have separate syllables and solkattus but they also impact these talas as well. Anudruta and Druta remain a constant factor (no jaati variations are applied) in these talas. On a careful observation of the structures above, it can be understood that none of the tala structures are similar and that is the factor for identification of a particular Tala.

Laghu (Jaati) Variations Applied on Suladi Sapta Talas

Laghu variation means that the finger counts vary with the number that is pre-decided for the tala. They can be Tisra (3), Catusra (4), Khanda (5), Misra (7) and Sankirna (9). The talas are clearly mentioned by these identifiers and by the following prefixes:

Laghu Jaati	Nomenclature
3	Tisra Jaati
4	Catusra Jaati
5	Khanda Jaati
7	Misra Jaati
9	Sankirna Jaati

Assume a tala is named as 'Catusra Jaati Matya Tala' with a structure of 'I O I', both laghus (I) will have four beats each ie., a beat followed by 3 finger counts (Pinky, ring and middle). The total count for this Tala (Catusra Jaati Matya Tala) is 10 beats and represented as I4 O I4. Jaati variations (variations based on finger counts ie., Laghu) are applied to all the 7 talas.

For an easy reference the total counts are given below in the table.

Name of Tala	Tala Structure	Jaati Variations of Laghu				
		Tisra	Catusra	Khanda	Misra	Sankirna
Dhruva	I O I I	11	14	17	23	29
Matya	I O I	8	10	12	16	20
Ata	I I O O	10	12	14	18	22
Triputa	I O O	7	8	9	11	13
Jhampa	I U O	6	7	8	10	12
Rupaka	O I	5	6	7	9	11
Eka	I	3	4	5	7	9

Annexure 2

Glossary of Technical Terms

Akshara: Akshara is normally construed as a Beat in a Tala

Anga: Parts of a Tala

Anudruta: Part of a Tala which has a single beat as its structure having a symbol 'U'.

Arudi: Arudi is a short ending with the structure of //phrase (kaarvai) phrase (kaarvai) phrase//(ending stroke like tm or tha). Experts are of the opinion that any ending phrase that is played within 6 aksharas or 24 maatras can be termed as Arudi.

Druta: A part of the Tala, structure of which is a beat and a wave having a symbol 'O'.

Gati: Gati means beat subdivision. This is also interchangeably named as Nadai. Some Feel Nadai and Gati are the same, while others feel both are different. Functionally, Gati changes the internal pulses in a Tala. Normally, there are 4 pulses per beat (or 2 pulses per beat with respect to Chaapu Talas) which is changed to 3, 5, 7 or 9. Change of 6 is also allowed.

Jaati: Jaati is the variation in finger counts with respect to Laghu. It also allows one to identify the name of the Tala. For example, 'Khanda Jaati Matya Tala' means the Laghu has 5 finger counts viz., Beat, Little, Ring, Middle and Index finger. There are 5 jaatis Tisra (3), Catusra (4), Khanda (5), Misra (7) and Sankirna (9).

Jati: Jati is rhythmic syllable or a Rhythmic Phrase. Tha is also a Jati and 'Tha ka dhi mi' is also Jati. In tamil there are two different phrases 'sol' and 'solkattu' to differentiate between a syllable and a bunch of them.

Kaarvai: Kaarvai is a pause or a gap given between rhtymic phrases.

Kalai: Kalai decides the number of sub-beats within the main beat. If it is 2 kalai then there will be 1 additional beat to the main beat. For example, in Adi Tala each of the beats will take 1 additional beat in 2 kalai making the toal to 16 beats per cycle. In 4 kalai each of the beats will take 3 additional beats and the total count will be 32. The kalai can be used for any of the Suladi Sapta Talas. For example, Khanda Jaati Triputa Tala 2 Kalai maeans 18 beats in Total (basic 9 beats with 1 additional beats for each of them giving rise to 18 beats).

Korvai: A structured cadential form having a definite Purvanga and Uttaranga.

Kriya: It is an action of showing various parts of the Tala

Laghu: Finger Counts varies with Jaati number which can be 3,4,5,7 or 9

Laya: Laya is known as Tempo. Tala is the meter or the structure while laya is the gap between beats, which decides the fitment of jatis in various different ways.

Maatra: Maatra is the number of syllables between two beats.

Mohara: Mohara is also a cadential form having rolling patterns with a definite structure, played normally for 4 cycles of a Tala. The difference between korvai/Muktayi and Mohara is that the former is repeated thrice while the latter is played 4 times with a proper ending like // t l n g (tm.) t l n g (tm.) - t l n g // (tm.)

Muktayi: Muktayi has two meanings one is an ending patterns as popularly understood by many musicians. Muktayi, is also a structure, resembling exactly like a 'Korvai' but played as a stand-alone idea immediately after 'Mohara'.

Purvanga: The first portion or the rhythmic idea of a Korvai

Tala: Tala is a metric structure containing beats, finger counts and wavy actions called kriyas.

Trikaala: Rendering a Jati or a group of jatis in a Tala as also rendering an entire tala in Gemometric progression format of once, twice or four times. Trikaala rendition of a jati has to coincide with the starting point of the Tala, in which case the starting point will be different whereas the ending point will coincide with the beginning of the tala, while Trikaala rendition of a Tala is done from starting point to starting point. During Trikaala rendition, the rhythmic phrase is split as individual syllables and rendered as 1 syllable per beat in first speed, 2 syllables per beat in 2nd speed and 4 syllables per beat in 3rd speed.

Uttaranga: The ending portion of a Korvai

Yati: Arrangement of phrases in various ways. Ascending, Descending, Descending-Ascending-Descending, Ascending-Descending-Ascending etc.

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