

## RHYTHMIC DANCE PATTERNS IN COMPOSITIONS OF ŪTUKKĀḌU VENKAṬA KAVI

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### ABSTRACT

India is a country of many art forms and cultures which are interrelated and inter-dependant in many ways. Especially the fine arts - music and dance are like inseparable twins- bhāva and laya being the most common factors. Music and Dance always complete each other. In South India, Carnatic music compositions are the choice for many classical dancers for their performances. Many South Indian Composers have contributed immensely towards the Dance musical forms like Jatisvaram, Padavarnam, Padam, Tillana etc., which in general figure in a dance recital. Also, there are many compositions that particularly suited for dance with many jati-s, sōlkaṭṭu syllables with svara passages etc., though not intended specifically for dance, that are chosen for classical dance performances as they offer wide scope for the dancers for visual interpretation interspersed with dance specific jati-s and many more dance related aspects. Ūtukkāḍu Venkaṭa Kavi's compositions are one such favourite choice for many dancers belonging to classical dance forms like Bharatanāṭyam and Kūcipūḍi. The present paper aims to bring out the genius of Venkaṭa Kavi's compositions as a choice for dance performances, highlighting various aspects of dance centric rhythmic patterns present in his compositions.

**KEY WORDS:** Music, Dance, Rhythm, Jati, Venkaṭa Kavi, Bharatanāṭyam

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### INTRODUCTION

Classical Music and Dance have a prominent place in our culture and are the proud treasures of the heritage of our nation. Both Carnatic Music and Dance have prominent place in the Cultural and Fine Arts set up. These have not only swayed the hearts of the ethnic Indian community but also the hearts of the Universe breaking all the barriers. Together they have a great role in the Cultural Diplomacy and make the world a better and befitting place to live. Music is an inseparable part of Dance. They both are incomplete without each other. It is the music- 'Sangīta'- that adds sparkle to the graceful dancing.

In the early Indian context, the term Sangīta meant a composite art-form comprising of Gīta, Vādyā and Nṛtta – vocal singing, instrumental accompaniments and the limb movement or dance. The third component of Sangīta, viz., Nṛtta, again involved the use of other two components - Gīta and Vādyā.

**“Gītam vādyam tathā nṛtyam trayam sangīta muçyatē” (Sangīta Ratnākara)**

Thus, the term Sangīta combined in itself all the different phases of music, including dance. For Dance (Nṛtta), just as in the case of vocal (Gīta) and instrumental (Vādyā) music, the rhythm (Laya) is very vital. The Dance too was

regarded as a kind of music. This is similar to human body where the different limbs function in harmony with the body's rhythm.

Thus, a dance performance is a feast for both eyes and ears. Music becomes visual in a dance performance. The text (lyrics) of the song is translated to action and through that media, the message is conveyed, the story is narrated, the incident described and the feeling expressed. According to the well-known adage - "There can be music without dance, but there can be no dance without music".

### Repertoire

Many dance forms flourished in India, each of these having their own individual style of music. Carnatic music has been playing an important role, particularly in South Indian classical dance forms like Bharatanāṭyam, Kūçipūḍi etc. Several musical forms that are suitable exclusively for dance recital were composed down the centuries. Apart from such regular dance proforma, compositions of many Vaggēyakāra-s, though not particularly intended for dance, have become the choice of many classical dancers, to bring out and expose the vast and varied elements of Abhinaya and various rhythmic patterns contained in them.

Ūtukkāḍu Venkaṭa Kavi's compositions are one such favourite choice featuring in South Indian Classical Dances like Bharatanāṭyam and Kūçipūḍi repertoire.

### Ūtukkāḍu Venkaṭa Kavi

Ūtukkāḍu Venkaṭa Kavi (1700-1765) was one of the pioneering composers of South India. His contribution to music, dance and spiritual lore is immense. He was born in the month of Aippāsi, (Saptami – Makham star) at Mannārguḍi to Rāmaçandra and Kamalānārāyaṇi. Venkaṭa Kavi had learnt elementary music from Pūranūr Naṭēśa Bhāgavatār alias Rāja Bhāgavatār and could find none to teach him further and ultimately found his 'Mānaśika' Guru in the Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself.

### Composer Par Excellence

Venkaṭa Kavi's compositions consist of various aspects like Melody, Rhythm, Lyrics, Opera, Dance, Indian Culture, Historic luminaries and various other themes. His compositions have been the outpouring of his divine spiritual experiences glittering with lyrical feat and musical feast replete with rāga-bhāva-rasa-anubhava. He has followed the kṛti pattern of the earlier composers (like Annamāçārya and Purandaradāsa), and the kannigaḷ pattern (number of stanzas sung to the same tune) of the Divya Prabandham of the earlier Āḷvar-s and sollukaṭṭu-s and sāhitya-s for them comparable to Aruṇagirināthar are in abundance in his compositions.

Venkaṭa Kavi had a deep devotion for the presiding deity of the Ūtukkāḍu temple, Kāḷinganartana Perumāl. His works express the closeness he felt towards the Lord and his deep devotion which is reflected in every verse he wrote. His compositions – especially those on Lord Kṛṣṇa have a reference to Kṛṣṇa's Kāḷinga Nartana.

### Dance Compositions

Most of his compositions are dance-oriented, and contain plenty of *sōlkaṭṭu jati*-s, and madhyamakāla passages. He was a master of intricate rhythmic patterns. His compositions are well suited for concerts, bhajans and dance. The most fascinating thing in his compositions is the combination of svāra, sāhitya and jati which he employed.

According to family sources – ‘Rhythmic excellence and soul-filling music of Venkaṭa Kavi has all the elements of Bharatanātyam like alarippu, sabda-s, jatisvaram, varṇam, jāvaḷi, tillāna-jati-s and varṇameṭṭu-s and have therefore become the favourite of dancers.’ The Maestro wrote Rudra Sabdam, Nandana Gīta, Rājagōpāla Nityōtsavam, Kāḷinga Nartana Prabhāvam and Śrī Kṛṣṇa Gānam with a part in kṛti form known as Rāsa padam.

### Choice of Dancers

The works of Venkaṭa Kavi are always a delight for dancers. His compositions are a blend of intricate rhythms with Bhāva laden lyrics which offers wide scope for beautiful visualisation and choreography that can transport the artist to a higher dimension. Known for picturesque descriptions steeped in devotion and sparkling jati-s, Venkaṭa Kavi’s compositions succeeded in gaining admiration and attraction in dance circles.

### Visualisation

Venkaṭa Kavi’s knowledge and fondness for dance are evident in many of his compositions. It seems he was inspired very much by the divine visionary of the dances of Kṛṣṇa, Vināyaka and Śiva. Also, the influence of Bhāgavata mela tradition that was prevalent those days in his region is also seen much in his works, which inspired him to compose pieces suitable for dance.

His description of dance reveals his extraordinary visualisation. This is evident from his approach to jati-s, svāra-s and yati-s readily falling into places and blending seamlessly with the abhinaya-centric parts.

The following is an admirable example of his visualisation about Kṛṣṇa’s dance in Rāga Nāṭṭai

#### Pallavi

*āḍinān nartanam āḍinān rāsa nartanam āḍinān sarasa rāsa nartanam āḍinān sundarigaluḍan sarasa rāsa nartanam āḍinān vraja sundarigaluḍan sarasa rāsa nartanam mighu bhakti koṇḍa vraja sundarigaluḍan sarasa rāsa nartanam antaranga mighu bhakti koṇḍa vraja sundarigaluḍan sarasa rāsa nartanam.....*

Here the Rāslīla of Kṛṣṇa – dancing with Gōpikas-s of Vraja - is visualised through the lyrics beautifully

### Jati Patterns (Dance centric Rhythmic Syllables)

Venkaṭa Kavi stands ahead of many Carnatic composers for his affinity, spontaneity, versatility and variety when it comes to jati-s (rhythmic or dance syllables). He has incorporated wonderful jati-s in many of his compositions. The following are some beautiful examples:

#### 1. Ananda nartana gaṇapatim – Nāṭṭai – Ādi

In this wonderfully rhythmic song, Venkaṭa Kavi prays to Vināyaka while He dances His divine dance.

*Jati pā ma ga mā ga sa sā sa ri sā taka taṇaku dhimita kiṭa taṇangu taka dhimita dhimita tām taii yaī tāmī tām taṇandari tām taka jhaṇam taṇandariī tām tām taṇandari jhaṇam taṇandari; tari tari tari; dhimi dhimi dhimi; . kiṭa kiṭa kiṭa.; jhaṇa jhaṇa jhaṇa; divipatinutam; padasarasijam ma ga pa ma ni pa ; marakatanibham ; mada karimukham ; praṇava ninadam ; ajitam anagham sugatam paramam kanakāmbara dharaṇam Eka radanam tattit taka jhaṇanta naga tari dhīt taka jhaṇanta naga tari taka jhaṇanta naga tari tām tattit taka jhaṇanta naga tari dhīt taka jhaṇanta naga tari taka jhaṇanta naga tari tām ; ; tattit taka jhaṇanta naga tari dhīt taka jhaṇanta naga tari taka jhaṇanta nakaparam*

## 2. Marakata maṇimaya çēla – Ārabhi – Ādi Tālam

In the last section of this kṛti, there is a mathematical reduction (kuraippu) from one cycle to half cycle before capping it off with another cycle. This feature is usually seen in solfa improvisations (kalpana svara-s). The composer brings in much beauty by switching between jati and lyrics in every alternate line. Most obviously, it is a popular choice in the world of dance.

*Çaraṇam mānita guṇa śilā dayālā mām pālayā varabālā gōpālā sā ni dha pa ma ga ri*

*muraḷḍharā nanda mukundā mama mānasa pada sarasīruha daḷa yugaḷā ādi*

*madhyānta rahitā vaibhava anantā kalyāṇa guṇā mama rakṣaka*

*Jati(madhyamakāla)*

*takiṭa dhrimita taka taka dhimi dhīmtaka taka tika tōm taka tōm taka dhiranā*

*vanaja nayana rādhāmukha madhukara rasika rasikavara rāsa vilāsa*

*takiṭa dhrimita taka taka dhimi dhīmtaka taka tika tōm takatōm taka dhiranā*

*navarasa kaṭiṭa śōbhita vallabha nava vrayayuvatī manōllāsa*

*taka tika tōm taka taka tōm taka dhiranā kanaka maṇimaya nūpura dharaṇā*

*taka tika tōm taka tōm taka dhiranā kamala bhavanuta sāśvata caraṇā*

*kalpita kali kaluṣajvara mardana kāḷinga nartana katitha janārdana*

## 3. Nīlavanam tanil – Punnāgavarāḷi – Ādi

This kṛti has jati interwoven in the Çaraṇa part as follows.

*çaraṇam nadik-karaiyōrattilē (yamunai) anru oru nāl innērattilē anralarnda narumaṇa malarō*

*malaridaśhō un matimukham enradum mati mayangi vashamiśhanda enniḍam*

*manadirangi arul purindu shenradum maravēnē kaṇam tariyēnē dhittriku tariku dhīm-tattari dhīmita jhaṇuta*

*jhaṇuta dhīm taka tadhingiṇatōm tattit takaṇak jhantari*

*dhīttāṇaka jhantari takaṇaka jhantari kalangamīlāda*

## 4. Vanamāli svāgatam – Nāṭṭaikkuranji - Ādi

In this composition, one can find jati patterns in Anupallavi as well as Çaraṇam with gati bhēdam of Çaturaśra and Khaṇḍa gati as well.

*Anupallavi sanaka sanādi muni gaṇārçita suguṇā çandra vadanā krta tākiṭa taka jhaṇanta*

*taka jhoṇutaka kiṭataka tari kiṭatōm takatari kiṭataka tākiṭa taka jhaṇanta taka*

*jhoṇutaka kiṭataka tarikīṭatōm tattōm taka tōm taka tiri tōm taka tari kiṭataka taka*

*tām ta śa ni dha ni śa śa ni ni dha ni ma ma ga sa sa ni kiṭataka tarikīṭatōm*

*tām ta śa ni dha ni śa śa ni ni dha ni ma ma ga sa sa ni kiṭataka tarikiṭatōm sa ma ga mā ; ma ga ma ni dha  
guṇāṅga taka taḷāṅgu taka tōm ta*

*(khaṇḍagati) tattit dhr̥kam dhr̥ka tataka tillānā - tattit dhr̥kam takadh̥kam tataka tillānā*

*dhr̥kata tillānā - tadingiṇat-tōm tām̄ta tillānā - tadingiṇatōm tām̄tām̄ta tillāna*

*tadingiṇatōm*

### 5. Nīradasama nīla Kṛṣṇa – Jayantaśrī – Ādi Trīśraṇaḍa

In this composition, we can come across jati-s in both the gati-s, the trīśra gati and khaṇḍagati. The jati is spread over both anupallavi and ṇaraṇam.

*Anupallavi naravara stuti rūpa vēṣa nava vraja yuvatī samēta*

*nādhiru tadingiṇatōmdhittām kiṭataka tarikiṭa*

*nādhiru tadingiṇatōm dhittām kiṭataka tarikiṭa*

*(khaṇḍagati)*

*ṇaraṇam*

*makara kuṇḍala dharita mahanīya vēṣā sakala jana munigaṇa samūha mana mōhā tara*

*kaṭaka karatala jvla jvalita jālā / taka takīṭa tadingiṇatōm dhittām sa sa ma dha ni sa sa ga*

*ma dha ni ni sa ga ma pā pā ma dhā ni sa ga takku dhinnam tariku tarikiṭaku kukutattai*

*kukutaṇaku dhiṇḍhīṅgu tikuṇa kuku kiṭataka tarikiṭatōm*

### 6. Muddu Kṛṣṇā Mēmudam Dēhi – Janjhūṭi – Ādi

In this composition, the jati is set in vilamba kāla at first then followed by jati in madhyamakāla, combining a high degree of sophistication and aesthetic sense.

*Anupallavi*

*nītya yauvanāḷankṛtākāra nīla mēgha kōmaḷāṅga śarīra navaṇīta ṇōra mahanīya rūpa*

*rādhā vilōla tara vēṇugāna gōpālā vara bālā agaṇita vitarāṇa guṇasīlā*

*Jati*

*{Vilamba kala} - dhittariku tariku tadingiṇatōm taka tadingiṇatōm takadika takadika*

*tadingiṇatōm / ga ma pa ni dha pā dha ma dha pa ma ga ri sa ri ga ma pā / tatām tadhīm*

*taṇam takum - tatām tadhīm taṇam takum – {Madhyamakala}(tatām tadhīm taṇam takum) / takkiṭa dhimi*

*tirikiṭa dhimi taḷāṅgu takajham tari takkiṭa dhimi tirikiṭa dhimi*

*taḷāṅgu takajham tiri takkiṭa dhimi tirikiṭa dhimi taḷāṅgu takajhaṇu taḷāṅgu takajhaṇu*

*kāḷinga Nartana*

### 7. Bṛndāvana nilayē – Rītigaṅga – Ādi

In this composition, we can find beautifully interspersed jati pattern in the samīṣṭi çaraṇa as follows

#### *Samiṣṭi Çaraṇa*

*śṛṅgāra rasōllāsa caturē .....*

*vasudēva dēvaki nanda mukunda gōvinda kāḷinga nartana rasikē*

#### *Jati*

*takkiṭa taddhimi tattari tajjhaṇu tām sā ni dha ma gā ri sa ni takkiṭa taddhimi tattari tajjhaṇu tām / kiṭatōm  
dhīṅgiṇatōm tadhīṅgiṇa tōm / tām dhīṅgiṇa tōm tām tām dhīṅgiṇatōm tām tām dhīṅgiṇa tōm tām dhīṅgiṇatōm  
tām tām dhīṅgiṇatōm tām tām dhīṅgiṇatōm tata jhaṇu taḍiṅgiṇa tōm taka taḍiṅgiṇa tōm taka tika tadhīṅgiṇa  
tōm tām / ga ga ma ri ga ma sa ga ri ga ma ni ni sa ga ri ma ni ni sa sa nI sa sa ri sā ; ghiṇatōm taghiṇatōm  
tadhīṅgiṇatōm taka tadhīṅgiṇatōm taka tika tadhīṅgiṇatōm*

### 8. Bhuvana Mōha Saundara Sukumāra – Dhanyāsi – Ādi

In this composition, Venkaṭa Kavi has created jati patterns interspersed with svāra-s and then composed lyrics to match these in the next line

#### *Çaraṇam*

*muhūrta ravatu sanga tarangita kumkuma candana kaḷabha samīṣṭa sundaram*

.....

*su-vacanā tāpa samida mama kānta kānta taka dhīmta dhīmta kāḷinga nartana*

*(madhyamakālam)*

*tānamkiṭa tajham tarita sa ga ri ni sā tajham taṇam takum tarita - (jati with svāra)*

*padāmbuja svayam jvalita naṭanavarā tajham taṇam takum tarita - (lyrics)*

*tānamkiṭa tajham tarita sa ga ri ni sā tajham taṇam takum tarita - (jati with svāra)*

*pītāmbardhara maṇimaya makara kuṇḍalam idam jhalam jhalana – (lyrics)*

*dhītōm dhītōm ri sā pa nī sa ni dha pa taṇangu kiṭa taḷāngu taka dhīmta*

*takku tarikiṭaku tarikiṭaku kiṭata tadhīṭa kiṭa jhaṇata tānam tadhīmta*

*nṛtya nṛtya vṛṣa-bhānu sukumāri vidhīṭa pa-danyāsa bhāvāva rasika*

*atī nūtana kusumākara vraja mōhana sarasīruha daḷa lōcana mama*

*mānasa paṭu śōra su-svāra gīta su-muraḷīdhara suramōdita bhava mōcana*

### 9. Svāgatam Kṛṣṇā – Mōhana – Ādi (Triśra and Çaturaśra gati-s)

In this composition, the Pallavi and anupallavi are in triśra gati and çaraṇam is in çaturaśra gati followed by a combination of svāram and jati – first in çaturaśra gati and then in triśragati.

*Çaraṇam – (çaturaśram)*

*muṣṭikāśūra çāṇūra malla malla viśārada mudhusūdanā*

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*vraja yuvaī jana mānasa pūjita*

*Jati*

*sā dha pā ga rī pa ga ri sa dha sā*

*taddhit takajhaṇu tām / dhit takajhaṇu tām / takajhaṇu tām*

*takatari kuku taṇa kiṭataka dhīm / takatari kuku taṇa kiṭataka dhīm*

*takatari kuku taṇa kiṭataka dhīm / takatari kuku taṇa kiṭataka dhīm*

*(triśragati)*

*takatari kuku taṇa kiṭataka dhīm / takatari kuku taṇa kiṭataka dhīm / takatari kuku taṇa kiṭataka / takatari*

*kuku taṇa kiṭataka dhīm / tari kuku taṇa kiṭataka dhīm / kuku taṇa kiṭataka*

#### **10. Kanaka sabhā nāyaka – Naṭṭai - Ādi**

This composition of Venkaṭa Kavi in Tamil on Lord Śiva is again an explicit example resplendent with beautiful and elegant madhyamakāla jati towards the end of the composition, ideal for a dance finale.

*Çaraṇam*

*vēda kāṭṭilē viḷainda mai jñāna vittagamēviya karpakē aruḷ vindaiyē*

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*pañçākṣara vaḍivāghiya namah śivāyaverum narum tēnai aḷitta nanmalarē*

*Jati (madhyamakāla)*

*nādhru takkat-takkattōm dhrutaka takkattōm takkattōm dhinattināvena nakuntaraku*

*dhina tillāna dhittillāna dhīm tarana dhīrana tāngu taṇattari jhomuku taṇattari taṇakiṇa*

*taṇakiṇa tākkinaṅka nagajhaṇu dhīm tanāk-tināka nagajhaṇu dhīm tatā taḷ tataita*

*jhomta kiṭaku tarikiṭaku dhittillāt-tatakajham tiritilātta takkajham dhittillātta*

*tiri tillātta takajham tadikiṇatōm tatikiṇatōm tadīngiṇatōm*

#### **CONCLUSION**

Many choreographers separately include various jati patterns (dance rhythms) in the compositions they choose, to create different movements in their dances. But we can find the natural flow of jati patterns interspersed in the main text of many compositions of Venkaṭa Kavi enabling many dancers and choreographers follow the song as it is, still creating the magical feat they wish for.

Thus, the genius of Ūtukkāḍu Venkaṭa Kavi can be highlighted through some of his compositions repleting with rhythmic dance syllables(jati-s) and can be considered a great choice for classical dance performances.

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