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## Simhanandana Tala

**Abstract :** A raga forms the fabric of a melodic structure and the tala forms the life cycle and there by constitute one of the two fundamental elements of Indian Music. A metric cycle of a tala contains a specific number of beats which can be as short as 3 beats and as long as 128 beats. This longest 128 beat tala is “Simhanadana tala” which is the longest in 108 talas . “Simhanadana tala” is the 37<sup>th</sup> tala in 108 tala scheme. It is one of the rare tala . It is the only tala which has Kakapadam as its anga. In earlydays a Lion was drawn by footwork by the temple dancers for this Simhanandana tala. Simhanandana Tillana composed by Mahavaidyanadha Iyer is the only musical form found in this tala. Some tried Pallavis in this Simhanandana tala. A Simhanadana tala sculpture is seen at Madurai Meenakshi amman Temple.

**Key Words :** 108 tala scheme - kakapadam - plutam -128 beats- Bobbli Keshavayya - Syama Sastri - Mahavaidyanadha Iyer- Tillana- Lion- Jathis- Meenakshi Amman Temple - Sculpture

**Introduction :** Tala is the Term used in Indian Classical Music to refer to Musical Meter that is any rhythmic beat or strike that measure musical time. The measure is typically established by hand clapping, waving, touching fingers with the other hand , striking of small cymbals in Indian Tradition. A raga which forms the fabric of a melodic structure, and the Tala forms the lifecycle thereby constitutes one of the two fundamental elements of Indian Music. Tala in Indian tradition embraces the time dimensions of Music , that means by which musical rhythm and form were guided and expressed.

**A metric cycle of a Tala :** Indian Music is composed and performed in a metrical structure that repeats in a cyclical harmony from the start to end of any particular song or Dance segment making it conceptually analogues to meters. A metric cycle of a Tala contains a specific number of beats which can be as short as 3 Beats and as long as 128 Beats. The pattern repeats but the play of accent and empty beats (rests) are an integral part of Indian Musical Architecture. Each Tala has subunits. In other words the larger cyclic tala pattern has embedded smaller cyclic patterns. The tala as a timecycle and the Raga as the melodic framework are the two fundamental elements of classical Indian Music . The cyclic nature of the Tala is a major feature of the Indian musical tradition and this is termed as Avartam.

**108 Thalass :** This is one of the great tala scheme seen in early books like Talasamudhram, Chachapuda Venba, Tala kalivenba , Bharatha Siddhantham, Sangita Chandrikai, and so on. This 108 tala scheme starts with the tala Chachapudam . In this scheme Simhanandana tala takes the 37<sup>th</sup> tala. This is the longest tala in this scheme and in the Music World with a total count of 128 beats.

**Simhanandanam :** Simha + Nandanam . Simha is Lion and Nandanam may be Nardhanam because while dancing to this particular tala a dancer can draw a Lion by foot work. Many Temple Dancers had drawn Lion during Temple festivals in early periods.

**Structure of the Tala :** This is the 37<sup>th</sup> Tala in 108 Talas. The total count of the tala is 128 beats. This is the longest tala in 108 tala scheme. This is the only tala which has kakapadam as its anga

**Symbol of this Tala :**

$$8+8+1+\overset{|}{8}+1+8+0+0$$

$$8+8+1+\overset{|}{8}+4+\overset{|}{8}+8+1$$

$$1 + \mathbf{+}$$

**The Angas :**

Guru + Guru +Lagu + Plutam  
 Lagu + Guru + Drutam + Drutam  
 Guru + Guru + Lagu + Plutam  
 Lagu + Plutam + Guru + Lagu  
 Lagu + Kakapadam

**Counts :**  $8 + 8 + 4 + 12 + 4 + 8 + 2 + 2 + 8 + 8 + 4 + 12 + 4 + 12 + 8 + 4 + 4 + 16 = 128$  Here

1) Kakapadam	- 1	- 1 x 16	= 16
2) Plutam	- 3	- 3 x 12	= 36
3) Guru	- 6	- 6 x 8	= 48
4) Chatusra Lagu	- 6	- 6 x 4	= 24
5) Drutam	- 2	- 2 x 2	= 4
		Total	= 128

**Analysation of this Tala :** This Tala contains 18 angas ( one Kakapadam, 3 plutam , 6 Gurus , 6 Lagus, and 2 Drutams.). In this tala apart from commonly used angas Lagu and Drutam also contain rarely used angas like Guru, Plutam, and Kakapadam. Except Anudrudam all the Shodasangas are used. It is the only tala which has Kakapadam in its anga in 108 tala scheme. On comparison one avartha of Simhanandana with 128 beats is equivalent to 16 avarthas of Adi tala. Nowadays it is represented in Adi tala only. This tala can also be seen as a sequence of

6 talas of 108 tala scheme. They are Chachapuda, Rati, Darpana, KokilaPriya, Abhanga, and Mudrika talas taken in the same order. A lot has been discussed about this tala by musicians of yester years who refers to it as a “Simha Swapnam” which means terrific , challenging.

**A brief History from Time :** Simhanandana tala has been found quoted in association with well known musicians from past and present. The Legendary musical battle Sri Bobbili Kesavayya challenged Sri Syama Sastri ( 1762 -1827) by singing pallavi in this Simhanandana tala. Then Later Mahavaidyanada Iyer (1844- 1892) is known to have sung a pallavi in Simhanandana tala, Kalyani Raga. He later made the same into tillana in Kalyani Raga. This tillana is also sung in Kanada Raga. Mysore Vasudevacharya (1826 – 1906) in his work “ Naakanda Kalaa vidaru “ records Poochi Srinivasa Iyengar singing a pallavi in Simhanandana tala at Gayaka Samaja, Bangalore. At Madras Music Academy Simhanadana tala demonstration by Mudikondan Venkatarama Iyer is well known. In presentdays Vidwan Suguna Purushothaman is known for giving concerts and presenting Lec- Demo in Simhanadana tala.

**Simhanandanam and Dance :** This is an ancient form of TempleDance practiced several centuries back (around 14<sup>th</sup> /15<sup>th</sup> Century), by the Temple Dancers. In this type of Dance the Dancer will paint a picture by footwork. It is mentioned that the floor was completely covered with color powder and the Dancer drew the picture painting of Lion which was considered to be the vehicle of the Goddess Durga. The Dancers can also draw Snakes, Lotus, Kumbam, ( motif of a pot) Chariot, Elephant for particular jathis for example

Nagabandam – Snake  
Kamalabandam – Lotus  
Radhabandam – Chariot  
Gajabandam – Elephant

**Dancing Stage :** In the Temple Dancing Hall they will arrange for a square stage of 10 feet length and 10 feet width with soft sand. The thickness of the sand will be of 3”. The whole sand space will be covered by a thin cloth . The Dancers will dance over the cloth. At the end after the removal of the cloth we can visualize a Lion in a sitting posture. The Dancer will start drawing from the face of the Lion. By foot work they will draw the whole Lion.

**Dance Exponants Simhanandanam :** In last century Thiruvarur Kamalam and her daughter Thiruvarur Gnanam were experts in this Simhanadanam Dance. Saraswathi a student of famous Gangai Muthu Nattuvanar was an expert in this. It is said that during 1868 in Madurai Meenakshi Amman Temple Festival Madurai Ponnuthaayee Danced for this Simhanandana tala.

**Simhanandana Thillana :** Only musical and Dance form seen in this Tala is Tillana. This Simhanandana tala Thillana is constructed by (1844 – 1893) in the raga Kanada.

## Simhanandana Thillana

### Pallavi

Gauri nayaka Ghana shubha dayaka  
Kamalaa Kaantaa dayaka  
Kaala Kaala soola Kara  
Gangaadara purahara  
Gaja sarmaambara  
Kaala Kanthira Sundara Mandira  
Gaayaka Kesara Busura Naravara  
Sthiragiri Kaarmuka kaala  
Kanaka Sabaa Nataraja maamave.

### Sollukkattu or Jathis :

Dhimitara dhirana tana dhirana  
tanadhirana tana tana dhirana  
udani tanam tananam dhinna  
dhir dhir taani tanam tanam  
tanamta dhittam dhirana tana dhirana  
tanaa tom dhiru tana dhirana  
dhitlaam tlaam tlaam.

### Madyama Kala Jathi;

Tadani udani dhittillaana dhri dhiru  
tillillaana jhomtari kita takaje  
tillillaana jhomtari kita takaje  
tillillaana jhomtari kita takaje.

### Analysation :

Mahavaidyanatha Iyer's Thillana Gouri Nayaka in Kanada raga, Simhanandana Tala is a brilliant composition. This is the only tillana in this Tala. The entire composition consists of only 2 avarthanas. The first avarthana containing sahitya in Sanskrit in praise of Lord Nataraja of Kanaga Sabai that is Chidambaram. This portion gives scope for abinaya for Dancers. The second portion of one full Avarthana consists of beautiful Jathis. This portion is for the scintillating footwork of the Dancer. This part has madyama kala Jathi. This part has prabandha mudra "Tillana" in its last line. This portion ends in a small thirmanam . The Jathi " tillillaana jhomtari kita taka " has been repeated three times. The rhythmic elements of thillana like dirana tana dirana, tana nam, dhirdhir tani, dhitlaam, dhittillana, jhomtari, kitataka are used. Some beautiful Yathi patterns are seen in Jathis.

## Mahavaidyanada Iyer



## Srothavaha Yathi :

Dhirana  
tana dhirana ,  
tana tana dhirana  
tanam  
tananam

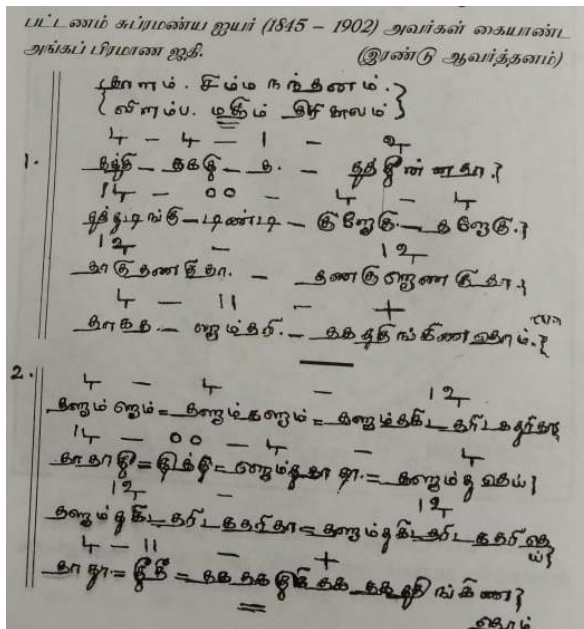
## Gopucha Yathi :

dhitlaam  
tlaam  
tlaam.

**Simhanadana Tala in 5 Jaathis** - It is interesting to see its total duration in all the five Jaathis that is Tisram, Chatusram, Kandam, Misram, and Sangirnam for Simhananda Tala

Jaathis	Total Counts
1) TisraJaathi Simhanandanam	- 97 counts
2) Chatusra jaathi Simhanandanam	- 128 counts
3) Kanda jaathi Simhanandanam	- 159 counts
4) Misra jaathi Simhanandanam	- 221 counts
5) Sangirna jaathi Simhanandanam	- 283 counts

**Simhanandana Jathi :** A Jathi was constructed by Patnam Subramania Iyer (1845- 1902 ) for two avarthas in Simhanandana tala (128 Beats +128 beats)

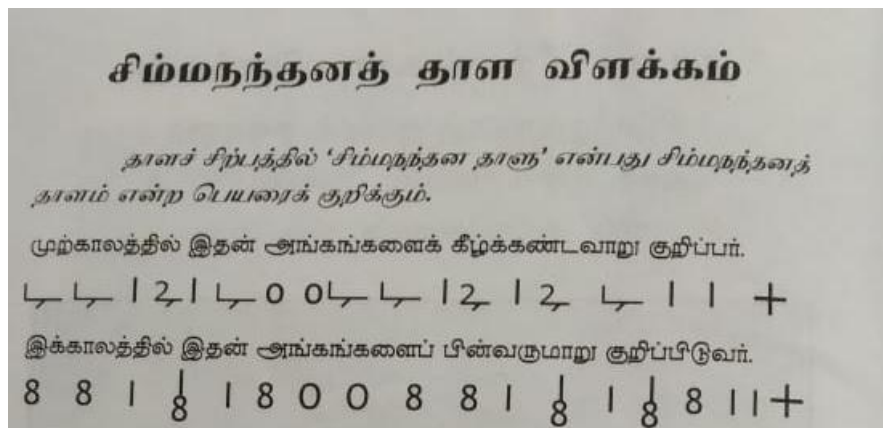
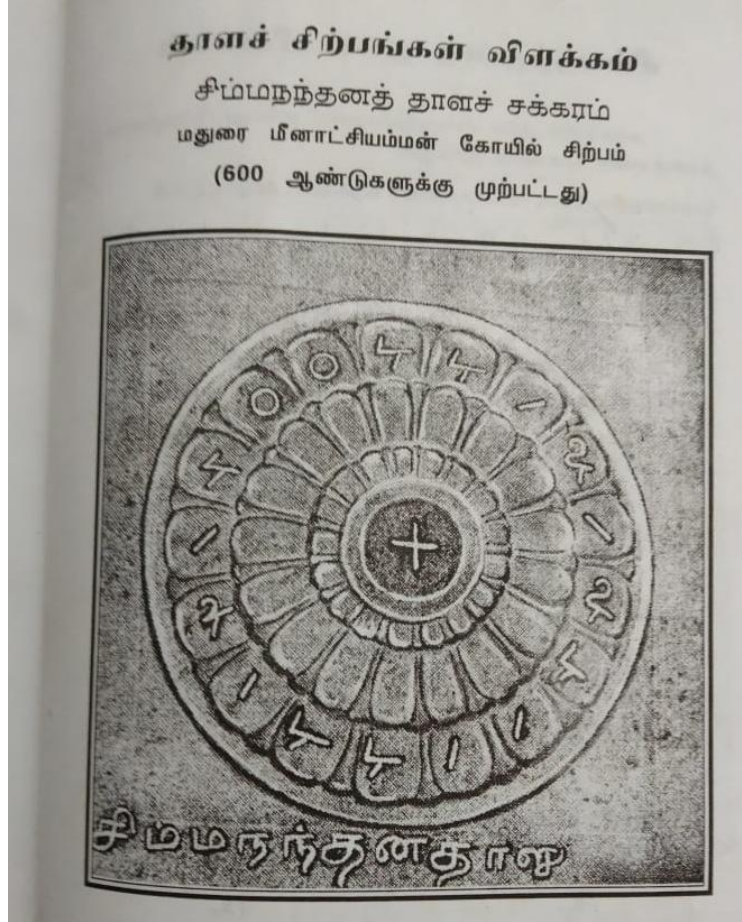


Patnam Subramania Iyer



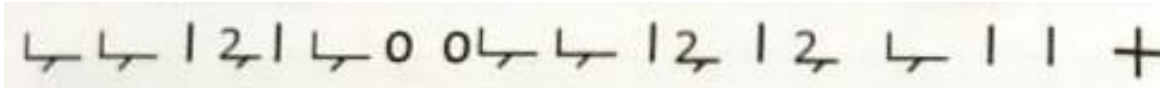
**Simhanandana Tala Sculpture :** Simhanandana Tala is engraved on a pillar in the form of a Chakra in Madurai Meenakshi Amman Temple. It is seen before Natarajar in the inner prahara of Lord Somasundareswarar. In front of Lord Nataraja statue there are two pillars and this Simhanadana Tala Sculpture is seen on the left side stone pillar

### Simhanandana Tala Sculpture



In this tala chakra it is mentioned as “Simhanandana Thaalu” . It is in the form of a circular flower like structure . As a whole it looks like a Lotus with three layers of petals. Each layer has 17 petals . In the centre there is a plain circular plate like structure . Small sized petals are seen around it and the next layer with medium sized petals and the third layer with big sized petals. In the centre circular plate + sign ( kakapadam ) is engraved. From the centre the first and second layers of petals has no markings. The third layer of 17 petals has the markings of rest of 17 symbols of Simhanandana tala.

The 18 angas of Simhanandana tala according to tala sculpture



Original symbols of Simhanandana tala



In the sculpture the symbols of Lagu(I) Drutam (0)and Kakapadam (+) are not changed but the Guru and Plutam are changed .

Guru 8 = L-shaped symbol

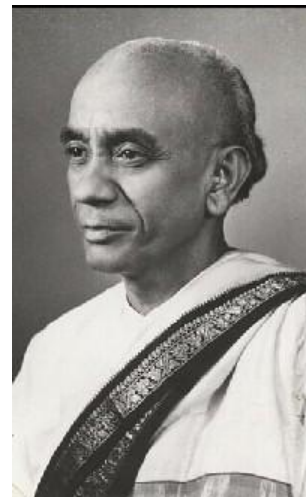
Plutam 8 with vertical line = vertical line with hook

## Experts in Simhanandana tala

**Suguna Purushothaman**



**MUDIKONDAN VENKATRAMA IYER**



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