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### **Exploring Jatisvarams in 72 Melakarta Ragas: A Masterpiece by Madurai R. Muralidharan**

**R. Usha & Dr. Shobana Swaminathan**  
**Vels University**  
**Pallavaram, Chennai**

#### **Abstract:**

This study presents an in-depth exploration of the extraordinary musical compositions by Madurai R. Muralidharan, focusing on his remarkable feat of creating Jatisvarams in all 72 Melakarta Ragas. These compositions encapsulate a seamless integration of Dance, Vocal, and Instrumental music, intricately interwoven with meticulous attention to both melody and rhythm.

The analysis offers profound insights into his distinct artistic approach and enriches the domain of classical music and dance by unravelling the layers of intricate melodic nuances and rhythmic complexities. As an exploration of his compositional genius, this study sheds light on the unparalleled artistry of Madurai R. Muralidharan, contributing to a deeper understanding of the interplay between music and dance in the Carnatic tradition.

**Keywords:** Jatisvaram, Melakarta Ragas, Madurai R. Muralidharan, rhythm, bhava, chakra

#### **Introduction**

Indian classical music is a cherished art form, resonating with the essence of Indian culture and giving rise to diverse musical compositions. One such is Carnatic music, which boasts a rich tapestry of compositions that spans various genres like Geetham, Jatisvaram, Svarajathi, Varnam, Kritis, Padams, Tillanas, etc. Each of these forms possesses its unique charm, purpose, and utility in the world of music.

Jatisvaram, an enthralling musical composition, finds its place in both music and dance. Primarily rooted in dance, it accentuates the rhythmic grace of classical dance forms like Bharatanatyam. However, its profound musical conception and rhythmic allure have also led to its inclusion in vocal and instrumental training, making it a valuable tool for understanding complex rhythmic patterns.

Compositions are divided into Abhyasa Gana, a technical form, and Sabha Gana, a melodious or concert form. Jatisvara, falling under Kalpita Sangita, involves pre-composed compositions set to music and tala by accomplished composers.

Historically, Jatisvara evolved from the 18th-century Svarajati, credited to Melattur Virabhadraya. The 19th century witnessed its prominence through the contributions of the Tanjore Quartet, who systematized Bharatanatyam with Jatisvaram, Svarajatis, Pada Varnas, and Tillanas.

Among the accomplished composers, Kalaimamani Sri Madurai R. Muralidharan stands out among Jatisvara composers for his exceptional achievement in crafting these rhythmic masterpieces in all 72 Melakarta Ragas. While other composers gained fame for Geethams, Varnams, and Kritis in 72 melakarta ragas, Shri R. Muralidharan remains the sole artist to have mastered Jatisvaram in this comprehensive set. His unwavering dedication and artistry make him unique in this distinct musical realm.



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### **Aim**

This study aims to showcase Madurai R. Muralidharan's unparalleled feat of composing Jatisvaram in all 72 Melakarta Ragas, illuminating this unique musical form's artistic brilliance and rhythmic elegance.

### **About the Composer**

#### **Introduction**

Madurai R. Muralidharan, a multifaceted artist, shines brightly as a dancer, musician, composer, Nattuvangam, and director. His artistry is characterized by presenting complex musical forms simply and comprehensively, captivating audiences worldwide, from the common man to connoisseurs. With a unique vision for dance dramas, his works reflect a versatile perspective, backed by extensive research. As an acclaimed Mridangam artist, he has mastered intricate margams set to seldom-used talas, including the longest tala, Sankeerna jathi Dhruva tala, having 29 beats. His profound contributions have left an indelible mark on the world of performing arts.

### **Early Life**

At the young age of 17, Madurai R. Muralidharan commenced his journey into the world of classical Bharatanatyam under the tutelage of the esteemed Kalaimamani Smt. Chamundeshwari. His unwavering pursuit of dance excellence paved the way for prestigious positions, such as being appointed as a dance professor at the esteemed Tamil Music College. Furthermore, his remarkable achievements have led to him being honored with a position on the advisory board of Dr Alagappa University. Extending his passion as a dancer, he also takes over the prestigious dance academy "Nrithyakshetra", started by his guru's mother Smt. Samandhagamani Palaniandy. His guidance has honed the skills of nearly 750 students, deepening their passion and expression of art in the world of dance.

He is known to have pursued training in the renowned Padma Shri K.N. Dandayudhapani Pillai's Natya Sampradaya, further enriching his expertise. Additionally, he received rigorous training in mridangam under the guidance of the esteemed percussion master, T. Srinivasan whose training imparted the art of crafting jatis and notations. He also honed his vocal skills under the training of Madurai T. Sethuraman. His innate talent and passion for seamlessly blending rhythmic patterns with the soulful beauty of ragas manifested into masterpieces that set him apart from his peers. This early foundation in dance, music, and percussion laid the groundwork for Madurai R. Muralidharan's remarkable artistic journey that continues to inspire and captivate audiences worldwide.

### **Compositions**

Madurai R. Muralidharan has left a significant mark through his vast repertoire of compositions. With over 120 audio albums exclusively crafted for Bharatanatyam, his dance music is embraced by dancers worldwide. His compositions showcase innovative tala (rhythm patterns), raga (melodies), and themes, setting new standards in the art form. He has composed allarippu in all 35 talas of the Carnatic Suladi Sapta tala system, over 120 Varnams, and jatisvarams in all 72 Melakarta Ragas. Adding to his compositions is a Varnams dedicated to the Sun God (Surya), a shabdham celebrating Jesus, and a depiction of Krishna's enchanting dance upon the five-headed snake Kalinga.

Notably, he has composed full margams in rare talas, such as Ashta Dasa Margam, Akhanda Margam, and Nava Dhruvam, showcasing his profound understanding of rhythm theory.



Drawing inspiration from traditional Hindu mythology and ancient Tamil literature, his productions have captivated audiences worldwide. From the grand portrayal of Silappadhikaram in 2009 to the mesmerizing depiction of Amara Kalki's historical thriller Sivakamiyin Sabadham in 2013, Muralidharan's productions are celebrated for their flawless execution and artistic brilliance.

### Awards and Recognitions

Madurai R. Muralidharan has been honored with several prestigious awards, including the Kalaimamani Award from the Tamil Nadu state government, the Kala Seva Bharathi from Bharath Kalachar, and the Kartik Award of Excellence from Kartik Fine Awards. He has also received the Mayura Nrithya Sagaram title and the Natya Sadhanai Chemmal and Kalai Chemmal awards from the Abhai Association of Bharatanatyam Artistes of India and Sangamam Global Academy, respectively.

## Study of Jatisvaram in 72 Melakarta Ragas

### Introduction

Madurai R. Muralidharan's compositions stand as a testament to his deep insight into the harmony of rhythms and bhavas. His works intend to explore the length and breadth of the jati patterns equivalent to the way the bhava is given prominence. His work focuses on creating versatile jatis in complex tala structures going beyond enhancing the existing Jatisvaram compositions.

His Jatisvara composition in 72 Melakarta ragas follows the Venkatamakhi format, which is organized into 12 chakras (6 chakras for Suddha Madhyama ragas and 6 chakras for Pradhi Madhyama ragas). Each chakra is known to hold 6 unique ragas. His jatisvarams fall in 12 different talas, with each tala being associated with each of the varied chakras.

### Deep dive into each chakra

Jatisvarams are unique compositions performed in both dance and vocal music that represent a fusion of rhythmic expression and melodic intricacy. Mr Muralidharan has composed jatisvaram for each chakra with distinct talas, showcasing his profound perspective in both nritya and music. Presented below are tables illustrating each chakra accompanied by its corresponding tala. Notably, the 51st raga Kamavardhini is set to Kanda Rupaka tala, while the remaining five ragas of this chakra find resonance in the Tisra-Matya tala.

No	Chakra	Tala	Angas of the Tala
1	Indu (1 to 6 ragas)	Adi	I <sub>4</sub> O O
2	Netra (7 to 12 ragas)	Misra – Chapu	O <sub>3</sub> I I
3	Agni (13 to 18)	Chatusra Rupakam	O I <sub>4</sub>
4	Veda (19 to 24)	Kanda – Triputa	I <sub>5</sub> O O
5	Bana (25 to 30)	Adi (Tisra Nadai)	I <sub>3</sub> O O
6	Ritu (31 to 36)	Sankirna Jati Ekam	I <sub>9</sub>
7	Rishi (37 to 42)	Tisra Ada	I <sub>3</sub> I <sub>3</sub> O O
8	Vasu (43 to 48)	Kanda Rupakam	O I <sub>5</sub>
9	Brahma (49 & 50)	Tisra Jati Matya	I <sub>3</sub> O I <sub>3</sub>
	Brahma (51)	Kanda Rupakam	O I <sub>5</sub>
	Brahma (52 to 54)	Tisra Jati Matya	I <sub>3</sub> O I <sub>3</sub>
10	Disi ((55 to 60)	Tisra Dhruva	I <sub>3</sub> O I <sub>3</sub> I <sub>3</sub>
11	Rudra (61 to 66)	Kanta Ekam	I <sub>5</sub>
12	Adhitya (67 to 72)	Sankirna Jampa	I <sub>9</sub> U O



## Structural analysis

All the jatisvarams composed across the 72 melakarta ragas adhere to the structured format of Pallavi, Anupallavi, and three Charana svara passages except the Jatisvaram in raga Varunapriya which has four charana svara passages.

All the jatisvarams commence with dirga tara sthayi sadja (ś,;), but the Varunapriya (7) raga jatisvaram commences with madhya sthayi sadja. The third charanam also begins with dirga tara sthayi sadja, but the third charanam of Sankarabaranam raga jatisvara begins with gandaram and Shanmugapriya raga begins with dhaivatam.

The Suvarnangi raga jatisvaram which is set in Kanda- rupaka tala has four avartas for Pallavi.

### Jatisvaras in different kalapramanas -

Jatisvara in raga Salagam (37<sup>th</sup> mela) set in Tisra – Ada tala ends with tisra nadai, i.e., the last avarta in the third charana is interspersed with chatusra and tisra nadai –

“p m g m | p d p m | p d n, | ś, n, | d, p, | g m p | d p m | p d n | d p d | n ś r ||” – (underlined svaras has to be render in tisra nadai).

Similarly, in Rasikapriya raga jatisvara set in Sankirna – Jampa tala has composed with tisra and chatusra nadai in second and third charana –

“|n, ; | ; ; | ; ; | s r g | r g m | g m p | d, ; | ; ; | ; ; | ś r ś | n ś n | d n d ||”- interspersed with chatusra and tisra nadai in second charana.

“|n, ; | ; r ś | n d ; | , ; ś | n d p, | ; ; | p m, | g m p | d p, | m p d | n d, | p d n ||”.

## Characteristic feature seen in Madurai Muralidharan’s Jatisvarams

1. Melodic embellishments like Aroha – Avaroha prayōga are seen in the pallavi itself, though all the jatisvaras are composed in mela ragas.

Janta prayōgas are handled beautifully in these jatisvaras – in Shyamalangi raga jatisvara set in Tisra – Dhruva tala has many Janta prayōgas –“g g r r – g g r r s, ; m m g g m m g g m, ; d n d d”.

2. **Raga ranjaga prayōga** -The characteristic raga phrases are beautifully incorporated into the jatisvarams.

(a). Raga Sankarabaranam which set in Adi (tisra nadai) – (ṇ r g r g m g m p d n d n r n r).

(b). Raga Mayamalavagowla, set in Chatusra Rupaka – (ś n, n d p d ś), (g m, p, d p m p d n).

(c). Kalyani (m n d p, - g d p m, - r m g r), etc.,

3. **Sthyai relationship** – the same phrases of svaras occur in both tara, madhya or mandra sthayi –

(a) Ratnanki raga jatisvara set in Adi tala – (ś r m ġ r ś) – (s r m g r s) seen in both tara and madhya sthayi.

(b) Hanumatodi raga jatisvara in Misra – Chapu tala – (ś r, ġ r ś n) – (s r, g r s n)

(c). Jalarnavam raga jatisvara in Tisra – Ada – (ġ m p m) – (g m p m).

4. Patterns of svaras in **Srothovahayathi** patterns are seen in most of the jatisvarams.

(a). Natakapriya (10<sup>th</sup> mela) jatisvara in Misra -Chapu tala,

(ġ, - r ġ, - ś r ġ, - n ś r ġ, - d n ś r ġ, - p d n ś r ġ, - m p d n ś r ġ, ||).

(b) Vakulabharanam (14<sup>th</sup> Mela) jatisvara in Chatusra -Rupaka tala, Srothovahayathi patterns are excellently incorporated in the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> avarta of the third charana svara passage covering all three sthayis -



(n ś, - d n ś, - p d n ś, - m p d n ś, - g m p d n ś, - n, d n, -p d n, - m p d n, - g m p d n, -r g m p d n,-  
ḡ, - r ḡ, - ś r ḡ, - n ś r ḡ, - d n ś r ḡ, - p d ś r ḡ,.)

(c). Pavani (41<sup>st</sup> Mela) raga jatisvara set in Tisra Ada tala

The third charana is observed with the Srothovahayathi pattern for four avartas.

{(ś r - n ś r - d n ś r - p d n ś r - m p d n ś r - g m p d n ś r - r g m p d n ś r )  
(ś n - n ś n - d n ś n - p d n ś n - m p d n ś n - g m p d n ś n - r g m p d n ś n )  
(p m - d p m - n d p m - ś n d p m - r ś n d p m - ḡ r ś n d p m -m ḡ r ś n d p )}

(d). Shanmugapriya (56<sup>th</sup> mela) raga jatisvara set in Tisra Dhruva tala

(p ; ; - d p ; ; - n d p ; ; - ś n d p ; ; - ḡ r ś n d p ; ;)

5. **Gopuchayathi** patterns of svaras are seen in most of the jatisvarams –

(a). Ratnangi (2<sup>nd</sup> mela) raga jatisvaram set in Adi tala –

(ḡ r ś n d n, - r ś n d n, - ś n d n, - n d n, - n,)

(b). Gavambodhi (43<sup>rd</sup> Mela) raga Jatisvara set in Kanda- Rupaka tala

(s r g m p d, ; - r g m p d, ; - g m p d, )

(c). Gamanashrama (53<sup>rd</sup> Mela) raga jatisvara set in Tisra – Matya tala-

(r g m p d n ś, - g m p d n ś - m p d n ś, - p d n ś) and (d ḡ r ś n d, - ḡ r ś n d, - r ś n d,)

(d). Dharmavathy (59<sup>th</sup> Mela) raga Jatisvara set in Tisra – Dhruva tala –

(ḡ r ś n d p m g r s, - r ś n d p m g r s, - ś n d p m g r s, - n d p m g r s, -d p m g r s, - p m g r s, - m g  
r s, -g r s, - r s, - s,).

(e). Chakravaham (16<sup>th</sup> Mela) raga Jatisvara set in Chatusra – Rupaka tala –

(ḡ r ś n d - r ś n d - ś n d).

(f). Kosalam (71<sup>st</sup> Mela) raga jatisvara set in Sankirna – Jampa Tala –

(ḡ m ḡ r, - m ḡ r, - ḡ r,).

## 6. Dhatu Prayōgas

Most of the jatisvaras are observed with dhatu prayōga, for e.g.,

(a). Senavathy raga jatisvara set in Misra – Chapu tala –

(ś r - n ś - d n - p d -m p - g m - r g-s r).

(b). Mayamalavagowla (15<sup>th</sup> mela) set in Chatusra – Rupaka tala –

(m g - p m - d p - n d - ś n- ḡ r).

(c). Gamanashrama (53<sup>rd</sup> Mela) raga jatisvara set in Tisra – Matya tala –

(p d, - m p, - g m,.) (m g, - p m, - d p,)

(d). Kamavardhini (51<sup>st</sup> Mela) raga jatisvaram set in Kanda – Rupaka tala –

(s g, - r m, - g p, - m d, - p n,)

(e). Shanmugapriya (56<sup>th</sup> Mela) raga jatisvara set in Tisra – Dhruva tala –

(d p, - n d, - ś n, - r ś, - ḡ r, - m ḡ,).

7. Importance is given to a particular svara and the svara passage is composed in such a way that the particular svara falls on the samam of any angas of the tala, which adds more beauty to the rhythm and will be useful in **Korraippu** during kalpana svara renditions.

(a). In Kanakangi raga jatisvara set in Adi tala, nishadam is given prominence and the whole second charana is interwoven with nishadam- “**n**; ś r ś ; r ś n d p d n ś | **n**; ś r ḡ ; | ...”.

(b). Similarly, in Namanarayani (50<sup>th</sup> Mela) raga jatisvara set in Tisra -Matya tala –

“**d**, ; ; **d d n d d n d**, ; | **d d** n d ś n d, | ; p d n p ś n ||

**d**, ; ; d n ś p d n **d**, ; |d p n p d n d. |; g m p d n ś ||....”

(c). Mayamalavagowla (15<sup>th</sup> Mela) raga jatisvara set in Chatusra – Rupakam, prominence is given to madhyama in first charana –

“m, ; ; g r g m p d p | , m, s | r g r g m g d p||



m, ; ; p m p d n ś | , n ś r ġ m ġ r ś r ġ || ... “.

8. Usually Carnatic music is based on gamakas sometimes plain notes also add beauty to the compositions, Sri Muralidharan has composed such plain notes without gamakas. For e.g., in Naganandini raga jatisvara – he has composed for two avartas –

“ś ś n n d d p d n ś r n n d d p p d p m g r p m || g r s n n s r r g r g m p m g m p d p m p d n ||”.

9. The presence of “Usi” or a karvai in the samam of any angas of the tala, gives stress to the samam and gives rhythmic beauty to the composition.

(a). Kokilapriya raga jatisvara set in Misra – Chapu tala,

“p, m, g, m, l, , m g r g m || p, d, n, d, l, , p m p d n ||”

(b). Yagapriya raga Jatisvara set in Sankirna – Eka tala –

“m g, r | s, r, | , g, m | , p, m | g, g r |, g m p | p m, p | d n n d | , n ś r ||”

10. Sri Muralidharan has incorporated the **Tirmanam or Korvai** towards the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> charana svara passage itself. In some jatisvaras, tirmanam is observed both in the second and the last charana section.

Tirmanam in the second charana –

(a). Kanakangi raga set in Adi tala - (ġ r, ś n d - r ś, n d p - d n, ś ġ r). Jati patterns for this korvai – **[tam tam , tha ki ta – dhim dhim , tha ki ta – jam jam , tha ki ta]**.

(b). In Lathangi raga set in Kanda – Eka tala tirmanam is seen in both first and the second charana- “(s r, g m p – r g, m p d – g m, p d n) – (6+6+6)”-first charana

“(s r g m p d n – r g m p d n ś - g m p d n ś r) – (7+7+7) = 21 matra ”- 2<sup>nd</sup> charana

(c). The jatisvara in Namanarayani and Visvambari, set in Tisra – Matya has tirmanam in Anu pallavi –

In Namanarayani - “{(ś r, - ġ r ś n ; ) – (n ś, - r ś n d ; ) – (p d, - n ś r)--- (3+6)+(3+6)+6 = 24}”.

Visvambari – “[ (s r, g m p,) - (g m, p d n,) – (m p, d n r)] – (7+7+6)”.

In Dhenuka raga jatisvara set in Misra – Chapu tala, Tirmanam or korvai is seen in Anupallavi, the first and second charana.

In most of the jatisvaras korvai is seen in the second charana itself, jatisvara in raga Ratnanki, Vanaspathy, Manavathy, Harikambhoji, etc.,

In Manavathy raga jatisvara set in Adi tala, ends with a long korvai in the pattern of three 6s and three 7s are brilliantly incorporated in the second charana –

“{(ġ r ś n d, - r ś, n d p - ś n, d p m) – (ś, n, d p m – n, d, p m g – m, p, d n r)}” – (3×6)+(3×7).

Karvais of 3 matras and two matras with tirmanam are skillfully handled by the composer towards the end – “[s; - r; - g; - m; - p; - s, r, g, m, p, - s r g m p – r g m p d – g m p d n – m p d n r]”.

Jati patterns seen in this korvai – **[tam , , tam , , tam , , tam , , - dhim , dhim , dhim, dhim , dhim , – tha ka tha ki ta – tha ka tha ki ta – tha ka tha ki ta – tha ka tha ki ta ]**.

Vakulabharanam raga jatisvara ends with 21 matra korvai –

“(g, m, p d p – m, p, n d p – p, d, n ś r)” – (4+3)×3.

The rhythmic patterns are the unique characteristic feature of the jatisvaras. Jatisvaras encompasses patterns such as tisram (3s), Chatusram (4s,) kandam (5s), and Misra (7s), primarily observed in conjunction with karvais.

**Patterns of tisram (3s):**

- Vachaspathi – Kanda Eka Tala  
(d n ś - p d n – m p d – g m p)
- Suryakantam – Chatusra Rupaka tala  
(ś r ġ – n ś r - d n ś - p d n)



## Patterns of Chatusram (4s):

- Kanakangi – Adi tala  
(n ś r ś - p m g r – p d n d - r ś n d -n ś r ġ)
- Chithrambari – Kanda Eka Tala  
(n d d n – d p p d – p m g m – s r, g – m p d n)

## Patterns of Kandam (5s):

- Salagam - Tisra Ada Tala  
(g m p d p – m p d n d – p d n ś r)
- Kharaharapriya -kanda Tripura  
(g m p d p – m p d n d – p d n ś r)

The author has skillfully integrated the tisram patterns in chatusra nadai as well as the tisra, and chatusra patterns in kanda nadai thereby enhancing the beauty of the melody and rhythm.

## Conclusion

Sri Madurai R. Muralidharan is a remarkable and prolific composer, who composed various types of compositions. His compositions stand out for their profound raga bhava, intricate melodic beauty, a meticulous rhythmic framework. The unique feature of these jatisvarams is that he has composed them not only in 72 Melakarta ragas but also in rare talas like Tisra Matya tala, Tisra Dhruva Tala, Sankeerna Jampa tala, etc.

These jatisvarams contain many characteristic raga ranjaga prayōgas, rare phrases etc. The sancharas of svaras travel in all three octaves (sthayis), usage of Dhatu svaras, and Janta svara prayōgas and many rhythmic patterns such as patterns of tisra (3), chatusra (4), kanda (5), and misra (7) are found in plenty. The incorporation of diverse jathi patterns in various Talas demonstrates the author's mastery over rhythm. The inclusion of these varied jathi patterns in the Jatisvarams is highly beneficial, not only for dancers but also for aspiring music students and instrumentalists. It helps improve their svara jnana for manodharma and develop the ability to handle various talas with ease. It provides them with an excellent opportunity for significant growth and improvement in their musical skills.

The intricate melodies, rhythmic variations, and structural details in these jatisvaram compositions showcase the richness of Carnatic music.

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