The Rhythmic Structure of *Melam*

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Abstract
Chenda is a versatile instrument and is used on various occasions, strictly Ritualistic to totally entertainment; both as a Leading instrument, a Rhythm keeper. Its usage in theatre is as the ‘talking drum’ that compliments with maddalam and with the body movements of the actors. This study analyses, *Melam* and its rhythmic structures, *Melam* is a type of concert presented at the temples in Chenda. This paper has formed from field notes and interviewing Chenda masters like Sadanam Vasudevan, Padmashree Mattanur Sankaran Kutty Marar and Padmashree Peruvnam Kuttan Marar.

Keywords: *Chenda*, *Melam*, Rhythmic Structure, Kerala Drum

Introduction
Music is always part and parcel of human existence. It could be observed that all human activities have music, tone and rhythm in it. India has the oldest recorded music tradition dating back to about 3000 years (Kuroor, 2014).Though existed before in varied forms, the classical music as we see today originated during the Vedic Period. It was known as ‘Samagaana’ with Swarams (notes) ‘Udatham’ and ‘Anudatham’. Later another note, ‘Swaritham’ was added during the period of Rigveda (the first Veda). According to the author of Sangeeth Darpana, ‘The words originated from Rigveda, Music from Samaveda, Abhinaya (acting) from Yajurveda and Rasa from Adharvaveda (Ramarathnam, 1969). The music with seven Sudhaswaras (definite, distinguishable notes), known as Saamasapthakam with 22 Shrutis (or Dhwanis) in each Sthayi was established by Sargadeva and Bharata much later. Natyasastram, the treatise on music and dance by Sage Bharata is an offshoot of Vedas. The fact that many Natyasastrams existed even before Bharata’s work shows the interest in dance and music in the past.

Contrasting views existed about the composition of Music. One logic is that since Nruthyam follows Vadyam and Vadyam obeys Geetham, or in other words, music is Tauryathrikam, composing of three elements, Geetham, Vadyam and Nrutham (Sargadevan). Another view is that Geetham and Vadyam make the Music (Nambisan, 2000).

Musical instruments and their classification
Indian Musical Instruments, popularly known as *Vadyams* are classified either on the basis of their Make or their use. On the basis of their make, these are divided into two; Swara vadyams and Thaala vadyams. Swara vadyams are further divided into two; Thatha Vadyam and
Sushira Vaadyam. Thaala Vadyam also has two subdivisions viz. Avanaddha Vaadyam and Ghana Vaadyam.

\[ \text{tatham chaivaavanadham cha} \]
\[ \text{ghanam sushiramevacha} \]
\[ \text{chathurvidham thu vijnyeya} \]
\[ \text{maathodyam lakshnaanvithm} \]

- *(Natyasashtra, Chapter 28 Jaathivikalpam, Translation by K.P.Narayana Pisharoti)*
- *(Pisharody, 1985)*

Four categories of Vadyams viz. Thatham, Avanaddham, Ghana and Sushiram, are the ideal ones.

- **Thatha Vaadyam**, instruments in which strings are plucked to produce notes, eg. Veena.
- **Sushira Vaadyam**, in which air is forced through holes and variation of frequency is achieved by changing the resonating column of air like in Basuri, Flute.
- **Avanaddha Vaadyam**, instruments with tensed skin on drums that are beaten such as Chenda, Mrudangam, Maddalam, Thavil, Thabala, Thimala, Edakka, Mizhavu, Udukku, Thudi etc. are of three types;
  a) **Ankyas**: Those to be kept in lap and played, e.g. Mrudangam
  b) **Aalingyas**: Those played while keeping as embraced, e.g. Chenda, Maddalam
  c) **Urdhwaka**: Those played facing upwards, e.g. Mizhavu

\[ \text{deevaanaam dundubheen drushtwa} \]
\[ \text{chaakaaramurajaam sthatha} \]
\[ \text{aalingyamoordhakam chaiva} \]
\[ \text{thadhaivaakika meva cha} \]

It is believed that Vadyams such as Ankyas, Aalingyas and Urdhakas were made in accordance with the divine Drums of Devas. *(ref: Natyasashtra, Chapter 33 Avanaddhavidhi, Slokam 9)* *(Pisharody, 1985).*

Natyasastra narrates the story about the invention of Avanadhavadyams as follows. Saint Swati was on his way to bring water. Hovering clouds suddenly started down pouring as he reached the Lake. Inspired by the melodious music by the falling raindrops on the Lotus leaves, Saint designed Avanaddha Vadyams in association with Viswakarma. *(ref: Natyasashtra, Chapter 33 Avanaddhavidhi, Slokam 3-8)* *(Pisharody, 1985).*

Vadyams are also classified into three categories based on their use viz.

- **Gaana Vadyam**, for solo or accompanying e.g. Veena, Flute, Violin
- **Thaala Vaadyam**, two, hose played continuously along with the song, eg. Mrudangam, Maddalam
- **Sruthi Vaadyam**, intended to maintain the Sruthi (frequency span of singing), e.g. Thambura, Sruthi box.
Musical tradition of Kerala

Kerala music has a predominant dominance of percussion instruments (Menon, 1986). This fact is explicit in the case of Kshetravadyams, which are the musical influence in worship associated with Kshetras (Temples). These are percussion-dominated in the sense that the main instruments are drums and cymbals and the rhythmic structure is the main feature of the music. The musical framework in these Vadyams consists of very sophisticated and elaborate rhythmical structure or format. Even wind instruments like Kuzhal and Kombu have a less important role to play and are more or fewer followers of a rhythm instrument.

Tantrasamuchaya, the treatise on rituals, mentions the importance of drumming during the Mudras of rituals and during festivals of a temple. In Kerala, members of the Marar and Pooduval community are responsible to handle the musical instruments during ritualistic activity. Depending on the intention, Kshethravadyams are classified into two main groups, viz. Anushtanavadyam and Aghoshavadyam. Sandhyavela, Keli, Thayambaka, Kombu pattu, Kuzhal pattu, Melams, and Panchavadyam are performed mainly with the aim of entertaining the devotees during festivals and are performed outside or in the outer part of the Shrine.

Vadyams like Paani, Parishavadyam, Edakka kooru done inside the temple are more or less ritualistic in nature. The main difference in these genres is that there is less or no chance for improvisation in ritualistic music. It is performed in unison with certain Mudras during the Tantric Kriyas by the Tantris. Anushtana vadyam is probably the oldest and the latter could be an improvement of it.

Melam

Samajasamaayi Melikkunnathu Melam –the ones that unite in unity is called Melam (NP, 2012). There are many Melams played on Chenda. They are mainly categorised in terms of their basic structure, the Thalam followed, or the pattern or style of playing. Some of the common rules of Melam can be summarized as follows.

Common rules of Melam

1. The Chenda Melams of Kerala is a well-disciplined orchestra of five instruments viz. Chenda-Edamthana & Valanthala, Kombu, Kuzhal and Elathalam. Melams are percussion wonders; hundreds of artistes linked in unison through synchronized beats of sticks, cymbals and sounds of music from pipes; performing non-stop for hours.

2. The most popular Melams are Panchari and Pandi. The stamp of Panchari is melody while Pandi is marked by its elegance. Panchari is played by hand and stick in Trichur while in Malabar it is both sticks. In Trichur area, the Edanthala and Valanthala of Chenda are respectively known as Uruttuchenda and Veekkanchenda.

3. Panchari stands as a guide Model to others Melams like Chempa, Chempata, Adantha, Anchatantha, Dhruvam etc. Pandi stands alone with its own uniqueness in structure. Each Melam, including the rare ones like Navam, Kalpam, Shadkari, has a strict procedure of playing and the innovative expertise of the drummer has less place in it.

4. In the past, there were no Institutions that taught Melam. A student joins the team as an Elathalam player or one on the Valanthala and learns the art by listening. Today, Melam is taught at The Kshetrakalapeetam of Vaikkam under Travancore Devsaswam Board and The Vadyavidyalam under Guruvayoor Temple.

5. One of the rules of Melam is that the number of Valanthala, Kuzhal, Kombu and Elathalam should be the same as that of Edamthala. Sometimes this rule is broken by adding more Valanthalas and Elathalams to add the echoing punch of the Melam.
6. A big Melam must have a minimum of 15 number of each of these instruments. A number of Valanthalas and Elathalams may be doubled. The team might have 110 to 130 members.

7. Each member of the orchestra has a fixed position. 15 Edanthala Chenda is positioned in a line facing the array of 15 Kuzhals. Behind Kuzhal, Kombu stands in a parallel line. Just behind the Edanthala Chenda line, the Valamthalas and Elathalams positions alternatively. In each instrument group, the Seniormost occupies the central post and others stand in his line in descending order of seniority on both sides.

8. An outsider cannot easily identify the conductor of the orchestra. The Pramaanakkar – Senior most of Chenda and Kuzhal, who are just facing each other, with codes and symbols like bending and rounding Kuzhal or nodding gestures, directs the Melam. Decisions on duration, times of Kalaasam, time allotment for each phase of drumming are instantly conveyed by the movement of the head to players on both sides by the Senior and is being transmitted to all members. After each Kalaasaam, the Kombu assumes charge, followed by Kuzhal.

9. Each Melam has a Kaalamital – a process of fixing the basic tempo, in the beginning. Right on the ending beat of introductory Valanthala drumming, a ddim is superimposed by the Edanthala with Ottakkol which is followed by beats in centre and rims for one full Thaalavatta. Then the Melam follows.

10. Exempting Paandi, there are three phases for all Melams. The first one is the Nerkolghattam, thakithaka tharakana. The second is Thakkittaghattam, ddim ddim tharikita thakathari kitathaka. The third is the Kuzhamarikkal. Each Kuzhamarikkal has 32 beats; each Chempata has one thakkitta, one Nerlo, and on Kai. Each Kalasam of Onnaam kaalam comprise of two Thaalavattams. From Randaamkaalam onwards there is only Therukalaasam during 2 Thaalavattams. The last Kaalam has only one Thaalavattam. After this, the Melam ends with the Theerukalaasam. This is the common feature of all Panchari-based Melams. An interesting aspect is that in Melam only thakkitta and Nerkolu is played and the basic lesson tharikita is never played anywhere in any Melam!

11. Also, Urulukol, which is common in other Kaalams is never played in the Onnaam kaalam.

12. Except for Paandi, all other Melams can be generally called ‘Chempatamelangal’, as those are based on parts or subdivisions of Chenpata. Hence the individuality of a Melam becomes evident only towards the end only.

*Picture 1: Melam performed by Padmashree Peruvanam Kuttan Marar, Click: Niraj Vishnu Nambiar*
Panchari
Details on Mathras and Aksharakaalams of Melams

Panchari - Known as Panchakarika in old texts. It is the process of doing 5 times and not doing once or 5 \textit{thuranna ati}-open beats and one Veesu -non beat. In a similar Melam, the Shadkaari, there are 7 Mathras; 6 beats and one Veesu. Each Mathra is made as multiples of 8-beat Chempata. There is an additional \textit{Pathinja Kaalam} in case of Panchari.

\begin{itemize}
  \item Kaalam 1 - 96 Aksharas
  \item Kaalam 2 - 48 Aksharas
  \item Kaalam 3 - 24 Aksharas
  \item Kaalam 4 - 12 Aksharas
  \item Kaalam 5 - 6 Aksharas
\end{itemize}

Hence there are 6 \textit{Kaalams} -tempos of playing. In some places, a \textit{Murippachaari}, comprising of only 3 Aksharas is played.

**Picture 2: Melam performance at Shri Koodalmanikya Temple, Click: Niraj Vishnu Nambiar**

Rhythmic Structure of Panchari

Panchari \textit{Onnamkaalam} – The First Tempo

The \textit{Thaalaghatana}- rhythmic structure of first \textit{Kaalam} has 12 X 8 = 96 Aksharas. After the \textit{Kaalamital} with one hand, one Chempata is played each time. The \textit{Thaalam} is being maintained on the Valanthala, the Vaythaari- vocal equivalent is given below:

\begin{itemize}
  \item 1) \textit{dhi-dhi-dhi-dhi-dhi} (pothippitikkunnu- controlled beating)
  \item 2) \textit{dhi-dhi-dhi } \textit{dhi-dhi-dhi X}
  \item 3) \textit{dhi-dhi-dhi } \textit{dhi-dhi-dhi X}
  \item 4) \textit{dhi-dhi-dhi } \textit{dhim-dhim-dhim-dhim-dhim (thurannu –open beats)}
  \item 5) \textit{dhi-dhi-dhi-dhi-dhi-dhi-dhi-
  \item 6) \textit{dhi-dhi-dhi-dhi dhim-dhim-dhim-dhim-dhim-dhim}
\end{itemize}
Here items 5 & 6, 7 & 8, 9 & 10 are pairs and 11 & 12 are occasions for \textit{Kalaasam}. This combination becomes the first \textit{Kaalam} of Chempa Melam if the third pair 9 & 10 are removed. Again if the second pair 7 & 8 are removed, it is the Chempata first \textit{Kaalam} (8 Chempata = 8 X 8 = 64). This is the only difference in the first Kaalam of Melams, hence they resemble very much in this phase.

The \textit{thuranna ati} – open beat on Valanthala is not performed from the \textit{thakkitta} of the second phase. This is the only difference. During the \textit{Kuzhamarichchil}, the tempo increases a bit. All \textit{Kalaasams} are always the last two \textit{Thaalavattam}. The ending \textit{Theerukalaasam} of \textit{Onnaam Kaalam} has two \textit{Thalavattam} duration.

\textbf{Panchari \textit{Randaam Kaalam} – The Second Tempo}

This is of two types. Let us examine the second one first. The \textit{Thaalaghatana}- rhythmic structure of Second \textit{Kaalam} has 6 X 8 = 48 Aksharas.

\begin{itemize}
    \item [1)] dhi dhi dhi X dhi X dhi X                              
                      \hspace*{1cm} (X – one \textit{Veeu} or 1 unit time gap)
    \item [2)] dhi X dhi dhi dhim dhim dhim
    \item [3)] dhi dhi dhi dhi dhim dhim dhim
    \item [4)] dhi dhi dhi dhi dhim dhim dhim
    \item [5)] dhi dhi dhi dhi dhim dhim dhim X X
    \item [6)] dhim X X dhim X dhim X dhim X dhim
\end{itemize}

From this \textit{Kaalam} onwards, there is only \textit{Thakkitta} and \textit{Kuzhamariikkal}. The second one is the process of playing the stick in small fine movements with the right hand. From this \textit{Kaalam} onwards, the \textit{Thakkitta} is played in \textit{Uruulkol} and perform the \textit{Kalaasam} in the last \textit{Thaalavattam}. The ending \textit{Thirukalaasam} of this \textit{Kaalam} consists of 2 \textit{Thaalavattams}(of 5,6).

\textbf{Panchari \textit{Moonnam Kaalam} – The Third Tempo}

Each \textit{Thaalaghatana} of third \textit{Kaalam} has 3 Chempatas i.e. 3 X 8 = 24 Aksharas. The Valanthala \textit{vaithaari} is as follows;

\begin{itemize}
    \item [1)] dhi dhi dhi dhi dhim dhim dhim dhim dhim
                      \hspace*{1cm} (X – one \textit{Veeu} or 1 unit time gap)
    \item [2)] dhim dhim dhim X dhim dhim dhim dhim
    \item [3)] dhim dhim dhim dhim dhim dhim dhim dhim
\end{itemize}

Here also there is \textit{Uruulkol} in the end at \textit{Thakkitta} time. Then two \textit{Chempatavattams}, \textit{Kalaasam at the beginning of the third}, then an ordinary \textit{Kalaasam} at the third Chempata,2 \textit{Thaalavattam} for the main \textit{Kalaasam}, at the end of first \textit{Thaalavattam}, and enter into the next \textit{Kaalam}.

\textbf{Panchari \textit{Naalaam Kaalam} – The Fourth Tempo}

Each \textit{Thaalaghatana} of Fourth\textit{Kaalam} has 1'/2 Chempatas i.e. 4+4+4 = 12 Aksharas. The Valanthala \textit{vaithaari} is as follows:

\begin{itemize}
    \item [4)] dhim dhim dhim 1 dhim dhim 1 dhim dhim dhim 1
\end{itemize}
This has Urulukol in the beginning. After the Kuzhamarikkal, the beats are as 8+4. In the end, the valiyakalaasam in the first 8 beats after ending. Hence 4 beats from first and 8 from the next makes 16 Aksharas.

**Panchari Anchaam Kaalam – The Fifth Tempo**

Each Thaalaghatana of Fifth Kaalam has \( \frac{3}{4} \) Chempat i.e. \( 4 + 2 = 6 \) Aksharas. The Valanthala vaithaari is as follows:

\[
dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ X \quad (5 \text{ open beats and one Veesu})
\]

The originality of this Melam is evidently depicted in this Kaalam. There is Urulukol too. The Kalaasam starts at the end of Thaal, performs one full Thaalavattam, and is taken at the 4th Akshara of the next one. There is only Thakkitta here for Kuzhamarikkal. There is no Valiyakalaasam here. Each Melam ends with a Theerukalaasam in Chempata 4 beats. Hence the last Kalaasams have no Valiyakalaasam.

**A Northern Version**

There is another way of performing this Panchari Melam. Formerly, the valiya Panchari with 96 Aksharas was not popular in regions north to Trichur (Dineshan, 2010). Here the Randaam Kaalam used to be played as the First, with differences in keeping the beats. Often a 3-bit Murippanchaari is added and the Melam ends with a Theerukalaasam after this fifth Kaalam. The Randaam Kaalam has 6 Chempatas i.e. \( 6 \times 8 = 48 \) Aksharas. The Valanthala vaithaari is as follows:

1. \( \text{dhi dhi dhi dhi dhi dhi dhi X} \quad - \ 8 \)  
   \( 1 \ 2 \ 3 \ 4 \ 5 \ 6 \ 7 \ 8 \)

2. \( \text{dhi dhi dhi dhi dhim dhim dhim} \quad - \ 8 \)

3. \( \text{dhi dhi dhi dhi dhi dhi dhi X} \quad - \ 8 \)

4. \( \text{dhi dhi dhi dhi dhim dhim dhim} \quad - \ 8 \)

5. \( \text{XX dhim XX dhim XX dhim XX} \quad - \ 8 \)

6. \( \text{dhim X dhim X dhim dhim dhim dhim} \quad - \ 8 \)

This is executed in 3 stages of Ottakkol, Thakkitta, Kuzhamarikkal with proper tempo. The last two Thaalavattams, 5\(^{th}\) and 6\(^{th}\) is used for Kalaasams. Often there is an item called Vakakottuka. This is more or less a free process of playing and filling with Emmams in thaalavattams of the Third Kaalam. This is probably due to the fact that innovative playing has no place elsewhere in any Melam. Here also the hierarchy is followed, and the ending is done by the seniormost. It then enters the Murippanchaari, which is ended at the completion of Pradakshinam with a Theerukalaasam. Though has a 3 Aksharakaalam, this is not Rupakam, as its Samam is the second beat.

**Chempa Melam**

**Onnaam Kaalam Chempa**

(The First tempo) - 80 Aksharas - beats. 10 Chempata (10 X 8 = 80)

As described in the annexure of Panchaari Onnaam kaalam, if two Chempata Vattams are uncounted, the Thaalam settles to 10 Chempatas i.e 10 X 8 = 80 (Menon, 1986). All other conditions remain the same and need no repetition.
**Randaam Kaalsm Chempa**
(The Second tempo) - 40 Aksharas - beats. 5 Chempata (5 X 8 = 40)

(i) \( \text{dhi dhi dhi X dhi X dhi} \) - 8
(ii) \( \text{dhi X dhi dhi dhim dhim dhim} \) - 8
(iii) \( \text{dhi dhi dhi dhi dhim dhim dhim} \) - 8
(iv) \( \text{dhim X dhim dhim dhim dhim dhim} \) - 8
(v) \( \text{dhim X dhim dhim dhim dhim dhim dhim} \) - 8

Total = 80

The executing details are not mentioned as it is the same way as that of the Panchari, and is applicable to all Melams.

**Moonnaam Kaalsm Chempa**
(The Third tempo) - 20 Aksharas - beats. \(\frac{2}{2}\) Chempata (8+4+8 = 20)

(i) \( \text{dhi dhi dhi dhim dhim dhim} \) - 8
(ii) \( \text{dhim dhim dhim X} \) - 4
(iii) \( \text{dhim X dhim dhim dhim dhim dhim dhim} \) - 8

Total = 20

**Naalaam Kaalsm Chempa**
(The Fourth tempo) - 10 Aksharas - beats. \(\frac{1}{4}\) Chempata (8+2 = 10)

(i) \( \text{dhi dhi dhi dhim X} \)

1 2 3 4 5

(ii) \( \text{dhim dhim X} \)

6 7 8

(iii) \( \text{dhim X} \)

9 10

Total = 20

**Atantha Melam**

**Onnaam Kaalam Atantha**
(The First tempo) - 56 Aksharas - beats. (20+20+8+8 = 56)

(i) \( \text{dhi dhi dhi dhi dhi dhim X dhi dhim X dhi dhi dhi dhim dhim dhim dhim X} \)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8-1 2 3 4-1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 8+4+8=20

(ii) \( \text{dhi dhi dhi dhi dhim X dhi dhim X dhi dhi dhi dhim dhim dhim dhim X} \)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8-1 2 3 4-1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 8+4+8=20

(iii) \( \text{X dhim X X dhim X X dhim X} \)
(iv) $\text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim}$

Total $= 56$

**Randaam Kaalam Atantha**

(The Second tempo) - 28 Aksharas - beats. $(10+10+8 = 28)$

(i) $\text{dhi} \times \text{dhi} \times \text{dhi} \times \text{dhi} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim}$

$$1 \ 2 \ 3 \ 4 \ 5 \ 6 \ 7 \ 8 \ 9 \ 10$$

(Ramarathnam, 1969)

$= 10$

(ii) $\text{dhi} \times \text{dhi} \times \text{dhi} \times \text{dhi} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim}$

$$1 \ 2 \ 3 \ 4 \ 5 \ 6 \ 7 \ 8 \ 9 \ 10$$

$= 10$

(iii) $\text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim}$

$$1 \ 2 \ 3 \ 4 \ 5 \ 6 \ 7 \ 8$$

$= 8$

Total $= 28$

**Moonnaam Kaalam Atantha**

(The Third tempo) - 14 Aksharas - beats. $(5+5+4 = 14)$

(i) $\text{dhi} \times \text{dhi} \times \text{dhi} \times \text{dhim}$

$$1 \ 2 \ 3 \ 4 \ 5$$

$= 5$

(ii) $\text{dhi} \times \text{dhi} \times \text{dhi} \times \text{dhim}$

$$1 \ 2 \ 3 \ 4 \ 5$$

$= 5$

(iii) $\text{dhim} \times \text{dhim}$

$$1 \ 2 \ 3 \ 4$$

$= 4$

**Naalaam Kaalam Atantha**

(The Third tempo) – 14/7 Aksharas - beats. $(14)$

$\text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim}$

$= 14$

Before the Kuzhamarikkal, all the 14 Aksharas are striken as open beats (Thurannupitikkuka) and after Kuzhamarikkal, it is considered as 7 Aksharas.

$\text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim}$, though appears as 7, in its micro-scale it is 14 Aksharas.

**Anchadantha Melam**

The vaithaari – rhythmic equivalent vocal recital- of a 14-beat Adantha is $\text{dhim} \times \text{dhim} \times \text{dhim}$ which is 4 beats played twice in succession. Here instead 5 beats are played in the last Kaalam. Thus the Melam with 5 beats – Anchati – assumed the name Anchatantha in the common parlance. Actually, it is the Natabheda –variety of playing within a fixed interval- thakkitta thakkitta thaka. This is scientifically known as Rambhanata (Vijayakrishnan, Layavinnyasam, 2018). This
fact is however not well known. It can be boldly stated that the Thaalam, Anchathanthais the same as chempata with the difference in the method of execution – Prayogavethyasaam.

**Onnaam Kaalam Anchadantha**
(First Tempo), 8 – Chempata, 8X 8 = 64 Aksharas– beats.

(i)  
\[
dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ X \\
1 \ 2 \ 3 \ 4 \ 5 \ 6 \ 7 \ 8
\]
- 8

(ii)  
\[
dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ X \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ X \\
1 \ 2 \ 3 \ 4 \ 5 \ 6 \ 7 \ 8
\]
- 8

(iii)  
\[
dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ X \\
1 \ 2 \ 3 \ 4 \ 5 \ 6 \ 7 \ 8
\]
- 8

(iv)  
\[
dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ X \\
1 \ 2 \ 3 \ 4 \ 5 \ 6 \ 7 \ 8
\]
- 8

(v)  
\[
dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ X \\
1 \ 2 \ 3 \ 4 \ 5 \ 6 \ 7 \ 8
\]
- 8

(vi)  
\[
dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ X \\
1 \ 2 \ 3 \ 4 \ 5 \ 6 \ 7 \ 8
\]
- 8

(vii)  
\[
dhim \ X \ dhim \ X \ dhim \ X \\
1 \ 2 \ 3 \ 4 \ 5 \ 6 \ 7 \ 8
\]
- 8

(viii)  
\[
dhi \ X \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ X \\
1 \ 2 \ 3 \ 4 \ 5 \ 6 \ 7 \ 8
\]
- 8

Total = 64

**Ramdaam Kaalam Anchadantha**
(Second Tempo), 4 – Chempata, 4X 8 = 32 Aksharas– beats.

(i)  
\[
dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ X \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ X \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ X \\
1 \ 2 \ 3 \ 4 \ 5 \ 6 \ 7 \ 8 \ 9 \ 10 \ 11 \ 12 \ 13 \ 14 \ 15 \ 16
\]
- 12

(ii)  
\[
dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ X \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ X \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ X \\
1 \ 2 \ 3 \ 4 \ 5 \ 6 \ 7 \ 8 \ 9 \ 10 \ 11 \ 12 \ 13 \ 14 \ 15 \ 16
\]
- 12

(iii)  
\[
dhim \ X \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ X \\
1 \ 2 \ 3 \ 4 \ 5 \ 6 \ 7 \ 8 \ 9 \ 10 \ 11 \ 12 \ 13 \ 14 \ 15 \ 16
\]
- 8

Total = 32

**Moonnaam Kaalam Anchadantha**
(Third Tempo), 2 – Chempata, 2X 8 = 16 Aksharas– beats.

(i)  
\[
dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhim \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ X \ dhim \ X \ dhim \ X \\
1 \ 2 \ 3 \ 4 \ 5 \ 6 \ 7 \ 8 \ 9 \ 10 \ 11 \ 12 \ 13 \ 14 \ 15 \ 16
\]
- 16

**Naaalaam Kaalam Anchadantha**
(Fourth Tempo), 1 – Chempata, tX 8 = 8 Aksharas– beats.

\[
dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ X \\
dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ X \\
dhim \ X \ dhim \ X
\]

In this Melam also, as stated elsewhere, in the 16th beat is played open until the fist is twisted up- Kuzhamarikkumvare; and after the Kuzhamarrikkal; the 8 beats are played thus -

\[
dhim \ X \ dhim \ X \ dhim \ X \ dhim \ X \ dhim \ X \ dhim \ X
\]

**Dhruvam Melam**
7 – Chempata = 7 X 8 = 56 Aksharakaalam– beats. This basis of this 14-beat Melam is the same as that of Chathurashraaathi Dhruvam of Carnatic Music. It is reasonable to assume that the
name Dhruvam might have been given by an exponent of Carnatic Music as this Melam is based on Atantha with 14 beats (Warrier, 1992). It is noteworthy that the word Dhruvam is aligned to any subject in connection with Melam! One of the peculiarities of this Melam is the fact that it is played only in three Kaalams – tempos, unlike others.

**Onnaam Kaalam Dhruvam Melam**

(First Tempo), 7 – Chempata, 7\*8 = 56 Aksharas– beats.

- (i) \(dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ X\) - 8
- (ii) \(dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ X \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ X\) - 8
- (iii) \(dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ X\) - 8
- (iv) \(dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ X\) - 8
- (v) \(dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ X\) - 8
- (vi) \(X \ dhim \ XX \ dhim \ XX \ dhim \ XX\) - 8
- (vii) \(dhim \ X \ dhim \ X \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ X\) - 8

Total = 56

**Randaam Kaalam Dhruvam Melam**

(Second Tempo), 3\(\frac{1}{2}\) – Chempata, 3\*8 + 1 \* 4 = 28 Aksharas– beats.

- (i) \(dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ X \ dhi \ X \ dhi \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ X\) - 12
- (ii) \(dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ X\) - 8
- (iii) \(dhim \ X \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ X\) - 8

Total = 28

**Moonnaam Kaalam Dhruvam Melam**

(Third Tempo), 1\(\frac{3}{4}\) – Chempata, 6 + 8 = 14 Aksharas– beats.

\(dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ X \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ dhim \ X\) - 14

The Theerukalaasam is performed after the three Kaalams of the Dhruva Melam.

**Chempata Melam**

It is 8 – Chempata, 8 \* 8 = 64 Aksharas. The Onnaamkaalam of this Melam is dealt with while discussing Panchaari Onnaamkaalam. Since other aspects bear a close resemblance, it suffices to state that; Randaam Kaalam has 32 Aksharas, Moonnaam Kaalam has 16 and the Naalaam Kaalam has 8 Aksharas. This is the 8-beat (mathra) Chempata. However, let us examine the Naalaam Kaalam alone.

\(dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ dhi \ X \ dhim \ X\) - 8

Chempata Melam, which has no link to the one discussed earlier. This particular one has only two Kaalams. This is common in the Poojakkottu and at the beginning of Paandi Melam (Vijayakrishnan, Mattanoor Sankarankutty Marar: A Biography, 2000). This has two Kaalams; one with 16 – Aksharas and another with 8.
Onnaam Kaalam Chempata Melam
(First Tempo), 16 Aksharas- beats.

\[
dhi dhi dhi X dhi X dhi dhi dhi dhim dhim dhim dhim X
\]
- 16

Randaam Kaalam Chempata Melam
(Second Tempo).
In the first phase,

\[
dhi dhi dhi dhi dhi dhim dhim dhim X - 12
\]
and then in the Second phase two Thaalavattams of

\[
dhim X dhim X dhim X dhim X dhim dhim dhim X - 12
\]
is being played, and then, in addition to two sequences of the first. The Thirukalaasam is performed by playing the Second phase alone.

Paandi Melam
Most of the Melams are Chempata-based and bears a relationship with Panchaari. However, Paandi Melam differs from this pattern and is unique and elegant in its style (Achuthankutty, 2013). It bears no relationship with the then Paandi Naatu (Tamil Nadu or another land). The elite community of the time seems to be reluctant to accept a non-traditional Melam and so they gave a sarcastic comment ‘paandi’ –meaning that something that is not of this land. Even today, except on rare occasions, Paandi is not played within the four walls of the temple. During the Pallivetta of any temple festival, the Paandi is the accompanying Melam when the procession reaches outside the walls for darshan of the mass. Pandi reverberates to the brim even in open fields and is the most thrilling experience. Hence this has already earned the most commonly appreciated Melam (Vijayakrishnan, Layavinnyasam, 2018). The instruments Edanthala, Valanthala, Kombu, Kuzhal, Elathaalam- and their respective positioning is similar to that of any Melam.

Shadkaari Melam
The basic structure is designed in a similar way as the 2,3,4& 5 Kaalams of Panchari. The last Kaalam of 7 Aksharas is like the 5th Kaalam of Panchari, though has an extra Aksharam. All other details, including that of Thirukkalaasam is like other Melams (Vijayakrishnan, Thayambakayude Rasanthandram, 2006).
The Kaalams respectively contain 56, 28, 14, & 7 Aksharas, as detailed below.

Onnaam Kaalam Shadkaari
(First Tempo), 7 – Chempata, 7X 8 = 56 Aksharas– beats.

(i) \[
dhi dhi dhi dhi dhi dhi X
\]
\[
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
\] - 8

(ii) \[
dhi dhi dhi dhi dhim dhim X
\]
\[
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
\] - 8

(iii) \[
dhi dhi dhi dhi dhi dhi X
\]
\[
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
\] - 8
Randaam Kaalam Shadkaari

(Second Tempo), \(3\frac{1}{2}\) – Chempata, \(3 \times 8 + 4 = 28\) Aksharas – beats.

(i) \(\text{dhi dhi dhi dhi dhim dhim dhim X}\) - 8

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 \\
\end{array}
\]

(ii) \(\text{dhim dhim dhim X dhim dhim dhim X}\) - 8

(iii) \(\text{dhim dhim dhim X}\) - 4

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 \\
\end{array}
\]

(iv) \(\text{dhim X dhim dhim dhim dhim dhim dhim dhim X}\) - 8

Total = 28

Moonnaam Kaalam Shadkaari (Third Tempo), \(1\frac{3}{4}\) – Chempata, 14 Aksharas – beats.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
\text{dhi dhi dhim X dhim X dhim X dhim dhim dhim X} \\
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 \\
\end{array}
\]

Naalaam Kaalam Shadkaari

(Fourth Tempo), 7 Aksharas – beats.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
\text{dhim dhim dhim dhim dhim dhim dhim X} \\
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 \\
\end{array}
\]

Other Melams Like Navam, Kalpam also do Exist, though Played Rarely. Today, Almost all the chenda players are experts in melam too. Some of the artists are Peruvanam Kuttan Marar, Padmashree Mattanur Sankaran Kutty Marar, Kadannapally Sankaran Kutty Marar and Ullyeri Sankara Marar.

References


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