

Analysis of "Sarasasāmadāna"

after Morley Halsmith

Performed by Karaikudi Subramaniam (veena), Trichy Sankaran (mridangam), and Lalitha Sankaran (tambura)

Raga: Kapināṛāyami

Western notation:

Ascending: C D F G A Bb c, Descending: c Bb A G F E D C

Indian solfege:

Ascending: Sa Re Ma Pa Dha Ni Sa', Descending: Sa' Ni Dha Pa Ma Ga Re Sa

Adi Tala: 4+2+2

This *Kṛiti* was composed by the poet/saint Tyagaraja (1767-1847), the most prolific composer of songs in the modern *Karnatic* concert repertoire. All of his songs are of a devotional nature, and in this piece he begs the help of Lord Rama in settling disputes. The text is written in the Telugu language. In a concert program it would most likely appear near the beginning, as part of a series of songs, with several other *Kritis*.

The *svara* (notes) of the Raga Kapināṛāyami (which has no omitted notes in its descending form) corresponds to the Mixolydian mode in western music (major with 7th scale degree, or *Ni komal* or lowered). But the *svara* of this raga are highly ornamented (played with *gamaka*). They draw upon a gravitational relationship to *pillar tones* (musical resting points) *Sa* and *Pa*, and depend upon linear melodic relationships and complex rhythms to advance musical ideas. The performers employ various devices to displace and then strategically realign the melody within the *tala*. A map of the musical form, a chart of the cycles and events, and transcriptions of the key melodic material in western notation follow.

ALPANA

This opening part starts with the *tambura* (stringed instrument), and its characteristic drone of *Sa* and *Pa*; the *Sa* here is equivalent to the pitch E. The *veena* presents a fluid, ornamented and rubato version of the *raga*, stating the melody at 0:47 on beat 5, before the entrance of the *tala*. The *mridangam* (drum) enters on the first cycle of the *tala* to introduce the *pallavi*. This juxtaposed entrance creates an offset between the *tala*, driven by the drum phrasing, and the melody. The instruments end together on beat 8+ of the twenty-first cycle.

SECTION 1

PALLAVI

The first seven cycles of *tala* make up the *pallavi* or song. Transcriptions (in western notation) of the two primary, melodic building blocks of the *pallavi* are found in figures 1 and 2 below. Arpeggio-like figures are played on the *veena* in cycles 2, 3, and 4. The first and third ones, fall on beat 2+e. The middle one falls square on beat 2+. Cycles 7 and 8 prepare the *pause* before the *anupallavi*, and are later recapped. The *pause* at cycle 9 sets off these two adjoining

parts, bringing the drummer to the forefront with double time, cadential rhythmic patterns and in particular, a *mora* (cadential formula repeated three times).

ANUPALLAVI

The next eleven cycles of *tala* form the *anupallavi*, a secondary, contrasting part. The lowered *Ni* is an important note in the melodic phrase of cycle 10 (fig. 3a) and its primary variant in cycle 11 (fig. 3b). The “arpeggio” appears once in cycle 11, beat 3. The *anupallavi* is supported by double time drumming, using the high-pitched drum head, while syncopated accents are interjected on the low-pitched head.

An additional section called a *chitta svaram*, is found at cycles 16 through 20, before the reprise of the *pallavi*. (This section is optional). The melody's contour is similar to that of the *anupallavi* (see fig. 4). However, it is highly rhythmic using triple rhythms (32-second notes) and characterized by highly subdivided and complex cross-rhythms generated by the drum. The drumming in the aforementioned reprise, to which it segues, reverts to double time and relaxes even more to the original tempo, during the *pause*. Unlike the earlier *pause* at the close of the *pallavi* and one at the end of the piece, this one does not include a *mora*.

SECTION 2

CHARANAM

The *charanam*, (verse or “foot”) typically a more relaxed, tranquil section, is formed by a verse that is six cycles long. It begins with the only high octave melody of the piece, beginning on beat 2e of cycle 3 and eliding into cycle 4 (see fig. 5). The use of the high octave provides a melodic climax at the outset of the section on the note, *Sa*”. The musical idea is expanded on in the middle octave over the next five cycles.

The *charanam* continues with a recap of the *anupallavi*. If this performance had been based on text, it might have continued into the *chitta* (referred to as a *chitta sahityam*). Only two cycles of the original *anupallavi* (10 and 11) appear here in reverse order (cycle 11, then 10). Cycle 10 is then improvised upon for a further five cycles in order to seamlessly transition into another optional *chitta svaram*. This reintroduction of the *chitta*, at cycles 36 through 39, brings forward yet more previous material, binding the piece into a unified whole. As before, the *chitta* segues almost seamlessly into the following part, with a different rhythmic dynamic than it had in its first appearance. Starting with double-time in drums it progresses toward triple time, creating a greater, more climactic contrast, especially given the complex cross-rhythms on the lower drum head against the *tala* and melody.

Finally, in a rondo-like fashion, the now familiar *pallavi* segment reprise (cycles 7 and 8) appears again—full of rhythmic contrasts—to complete the presentation. A *pause* prepares the concluding *mora*, where drum and melodic figures coincide, brought to a final cadence on beat 8+.

"SARASASAMADANA" FORM CHART

0:00

ALPANA

Opening improv of the Raga and statement of the melody at 0:49 on Pa continuing by elision into cycle 1 of the tala (see fig. 1)

Section 1

A. - PALLAVI

0:53

Cycle 1 - melody restated eliding into cycle 2

0:59

Cycle 2 - arpeggiated svara Sa (low) – Pa (low) – Sa (mid) Beat 3

1:05

Cycle 3 - arpeggiated svara Sa (low) – Pa (low) – Sa (mid) Beat 2+

1:11

Cycle 4 - arpeggiated svara Sa (low) – Pa (low) – Sa (mid) Beat 2+e

1:17

Cycle 5 – new melodic phrase / exploration of lower octave (see fig. 2)

1:23

Cycle 6 - middle octave

1:29

Cycle 7 - exploration of lower octave (built upon SA Ni Dha motive from cycle 5)

1:35

Cycle 8 – Melody comes to rest on Pa / **Pause** begins on 2 *dhrutams* (5678)

PAUSE

1:41

Cycle 9 – **Pause** drum improv – MORA 2x

B. - ANUPALLAVI

1:46

Cycle 10 – MORA 1x / Melody begins on 2+e (see fig. 3a)

1:52

Cycle 11 - arpeggiated svara Ni (low) – Ma - Ni (mid) on beat 3 (see fig. 3b)

1:58

Cycle 12 - improv on cycle 10 figure

2:04

Cycle 13 - beginning of evolution to cycle 16 figure

2:10

Cycle 14 - continued evolution to cycle 16 figure

2:15

Cycle 15 - " " " " " "

CHITTA SVARAM (optional)

2:21

Cycle 16 – Ni – Sa' figure repeated to move new figure beginning to beat 5 (see fig. 4)

2:27

Cycle 17 - improv on cycle 16 figure, w/ *kampita* (shakes)

2:33

Cycle 18 – exploration of cycle 16 figure

2:38

Cycle 19 - " " " " "

2:44

Cycle 20 - " " " " "

A.' - PALLAVI Segment Reprise

2:49

Cycle 21 - Pallavi cycle 7

2:55

Cycle 22 - Pallavi cycle 8 / **Pause**

PAUSE

3:00

Cycle 23 – **Pause** Dialogue / veena + drum

Section 2

C. - CHARANAM

3:06

Cycle 24 - begin on beat 2e high octave / apex of Sa" (see fig. 5)

3:12

Cycle 25 - back to middle octave

3:18

Cycle 26 - exploration of cycle 24 in middle octave

3:23

Cycle 27 – " " " " " "

3:29

Cycle 28 – " " " " " "

3:35

Cycle 29 – " " " " " "

B.' - ANUPALLAVI Segment Reprise

3:41

Cycle 30 – recap of Anupallavi cycle 11 w/arpeggiated svara

3:46

Cycle 31 - recap of Anupallavi cycle 10 figure

3:52

Cycle 32 - exploration of cycle 31

3:57

Cycle 33 - " " " "

4:03

Cycle 34 - " " " "

4:08

Cycle 35 - " " " "

CHITTA SVARAM (optional)

4:14

Cycle 36 - highly ornamented phrase – possibly derived from Anupallavi cycle 16

4:19

Cycle 37 - exploration of cycle 36 with extensive *kampita* (shakes)

4:25

Cycle 38 - evolution to cycle 40

4:30

Cycle 39 - continued evolution

A.' - PALLAVI Segment Reprise

4:36

Cycle 40 - Pallavi cycle 7

4:41

Cycle 41 – Pallavi cycle 8 / **Pause** / MORA 2x

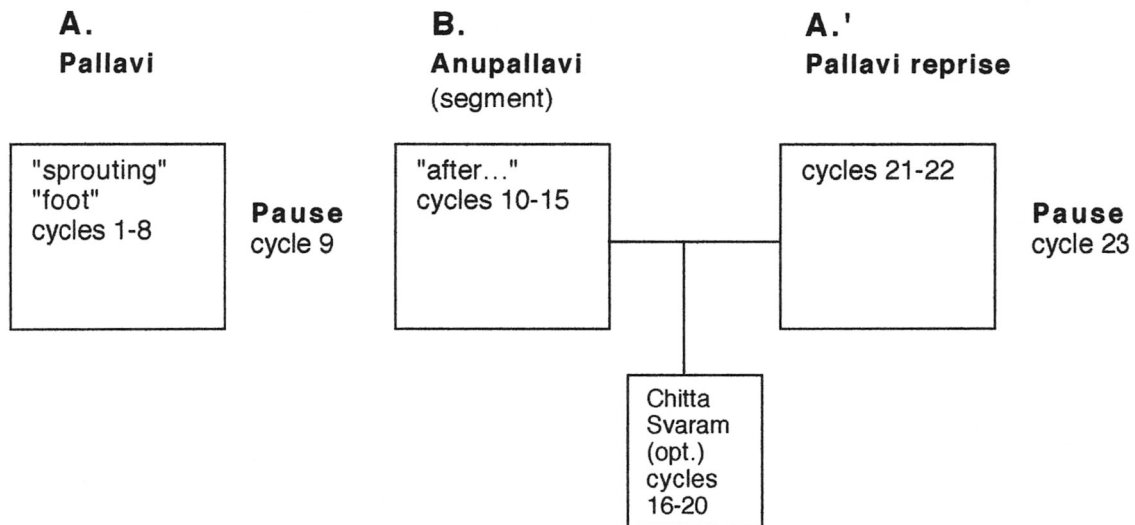
PAUSE

4:47

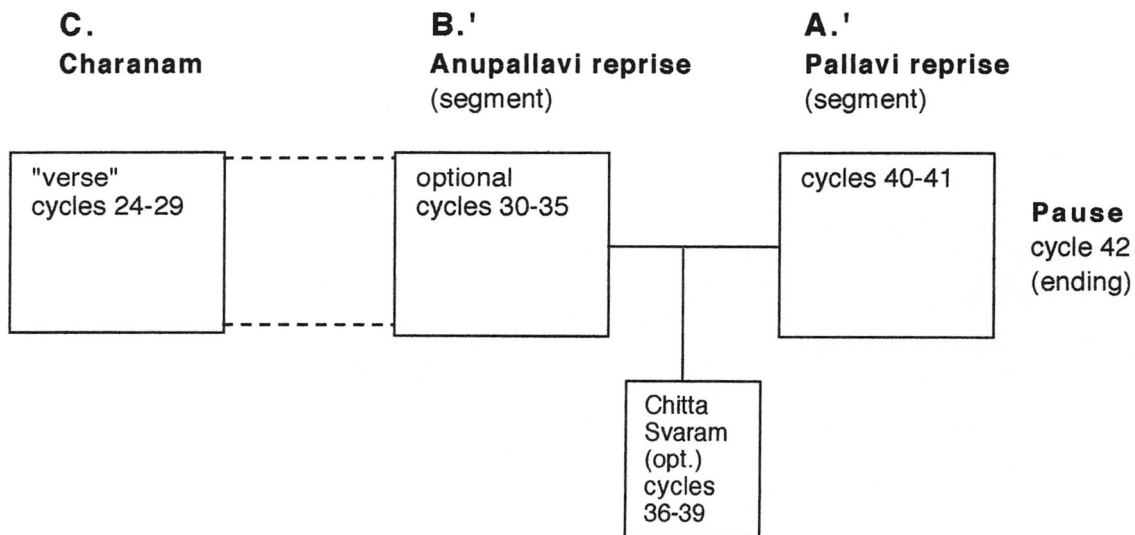
Cycle 42 – **Pause** MORA 1x and closing material / final Low Pa on 8+

FORM MAP

SECTION 1



SECTION 2



Primary Melodies in this performance of Sarasasāmadāna

ALPANA

Fig. 1 Tala Begins Pallavi - Cycle 1

Melody