

An efficient notation for Mridangam Lessons

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1 Introduction

We are going to see a notation for Mridangam lessons which is concise, easy to learn and is unique in its representation (there is only one way to represent each and every lesson). This method uses the duration of the words in the lessons for its representation rather than the words themselves. This gives flexibility in playing the lessons.

2 Use of Numbers instead of letters

In this system we use numbers instead of letters. Any lesson or *Sollu* is represented by its corresponding duration or *Mathirai* value. The basic examples for this are shown in table 1.

Representation	<i>Sollu</i>
1	Tha
2	Tha Ka
3	Tha Ki Ta
4	Tha Ka Thi Na
5	Tha Ka Tha Ki Ta
6	Tha Ka Tha Ka Thi Na
7	Tha Ka Thi Mi Tha Ki Ta
8	Tha Ka Tha Ri Ki Ta Tha Ka
9	Tha Ka Thi Mi Tha Ka Tha Ki Ta

Table 1: Basic *Sollu* and representation

The main advantage of this method is flexibility and conciseness. It should be noted that 4 can mean “*Tha Ka Thi Mi*” or “*Tha Ka Thi Na*” or “*Ki Ta Tha Ka*” or “*Tha Ri Ki Tha*” or any other equivalent depending on the place where it is going to be played.

3 Use of Punctuation to denote *Karvai*

We use punctuation to denote *Karvai*. The punctuation symbols used are Comma (,) and Semi-colon (;). Comma denotes a *Karvai* of 1 *Mathirai*, and Semi-colon denotes a *Karvai* of 2 *Mathirai*. *Karvai* greater than 2 *Mathirai* are denoted by combining atmost one Comma with more than one Semi-colon(s). The representation are given in table 2.

<i>Karvai</i>	Representation
1	,
2	;
3	,;
4	,;
5	,;;
6	,;;
7	,;;;
8	,;;;
9	,;;;

Table 2: Representation of *Karvai*

It should be noted that at maximum only one Comma can come in any representation. And the Comma should always come in the inner portion. The use of such a notation is shown in table 3.

Representation	<i>Thathakaram</i>
5	Tha Thi Ki Ta Thom
6	Tha Thi, Ki Ta Thom
7	Tha, Thi, Ki Ta Thom
8	Tha Thin, Tha Thi Ki Ta Thom
9	Tha, Thin, Tha Thi Ki Ta Thom
10	Tha; Thin, Tha Thi Ki Ta Thom

Table 3: Use of *Karvai*

4 Use of accent for *Thathakaram*

In the above representation, 5 can mean “*Tha Thi Ki Ta Thom*” or “*Tha Ka Tha Ki Ta*”. To avoid such an ambiguity, we explicitly use an accent above the number to represent that it is a *Thathakaram*, and play accordingly. This is show in table 4.

Representation	<i>Thathakaram</i>
5̇	Tha Thi Ki Ta Thom
6̇	Tha Thi, Ki Ta Thom
7̇	Tha, Thi, Ki Ta Thom
8̇	Tha Thi, Ki, Ta, Thom
9̇	Tha, Thi, Ki, Ta, Thom

Table 4: Representation of *Thathakaram*

Note that 8̇ can be played as “*Tha Thi, Ki, Ta, Thom*” or “*Tha Thin, Tha Thi Ki Ta Thom*” as per our convenience. 9̇ can be played as “*Tha, Thi, Ki, Ta, Thom*” or “*Tha, Thin, Tha Thi Ki Ta Thom*” and so on.

5 Use of overline to denote *Maelkalam*

When a *Sollu* has to be played in the next higher speed or *Maelkalam*, we use an overline above the *Sollu* to denote that. For example, 4̄ means “*Tha Ka Tha Ri Ki Ta Tha Ka*” and so on.

6 Combination of accent and overline

An accent and overline can be combined to say that a *Thathakaram* must be played in *Maelkalam* as shown in table 5.

Representation	<i>Sollu</i>
3̇̄	$\overline{\text{Tha Thi, Ki Ta Thom}}$
5̇̄	Tha Thi Tha $\overline{\text{Kita}}$ Thom
7̇̄	$\overline{\text{Kita Thaka Thari Thana Kita Thaka Thom,}}$

Table 5: *Thathakaram* in *Maelkalam*

7 Use of parentheses to represent *Karvai*

A number or *Sollu* within parentheses denotes a *Karvai* for that duration. Simple examples are given in table 6.

Representation	<i>Sollu</i>
(1)	(Tha)
(2)	(Tha.)
(3)	(Tha;)
(4)	(Tha,;)
(5)	(Tha,;)

Table 6: *Karvai* represented using parentheses

8 Use of subscripts to denote *Karvai*

Any number written as a subscript denotes a *Karvai* for that duration. It has the same meaning as using parentheses, but is recommended to make it quicker to write. For example, $1_2 1_2 1_2$ denotes “*Tha (Thin,) Tha, (Thin,) Tha; (Thin,)*”.

9 A complete example

A complete example is shown in table 7.

Lesson	Representation
Tha; (Thin,) Tha; (Thin,) Tha; (Thin,) Tha Thi Ki Ta Thom, Tha Thi Ki Ta Thom, Tha Thi Ki Ta Thom	$1_{;2} 1_{;2} 1_{;2}$ $\overset{\sim}{5}, \overset{\sim}{5}, \overset{\sim}{5}$
Tha, (Thin,) Tha, (Thin,) Tha, (Thin,) Tha Thi, Ki Ta Thom, Tha Thi, Ki Ta Thom, Tha Thi, Ki Ta Thom	$1_{,2} 1_{,2} 1_{,2}$ $\overset{\sim}{6}, \overset{\sim}{6}, \overset{\sim}{6}$
Tha (Thin,) Tha (Thin,) Tha (Thin,) Tha, Thi, Ki Ta Thom, Tha, Thi, Ki Ta Thom, Tha, Thi, Ki Ta Thom	$1_2 1_2 1_2$ $\overset{\sim}{7}, \overset{\sim}{7}, \overset{\sim}{7}$

Table 7: A complete example