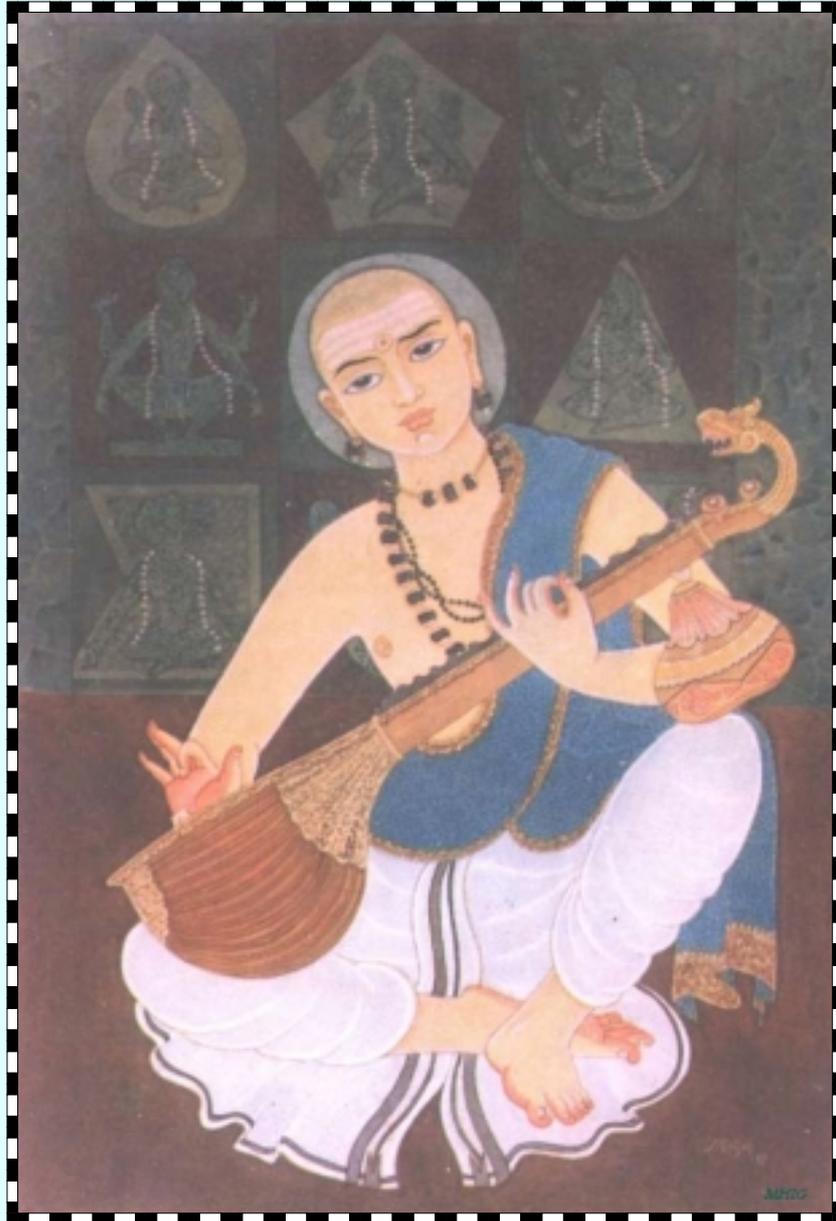
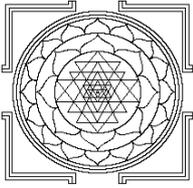


# Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar Evening



*10<sup>th</sup> November 2001*

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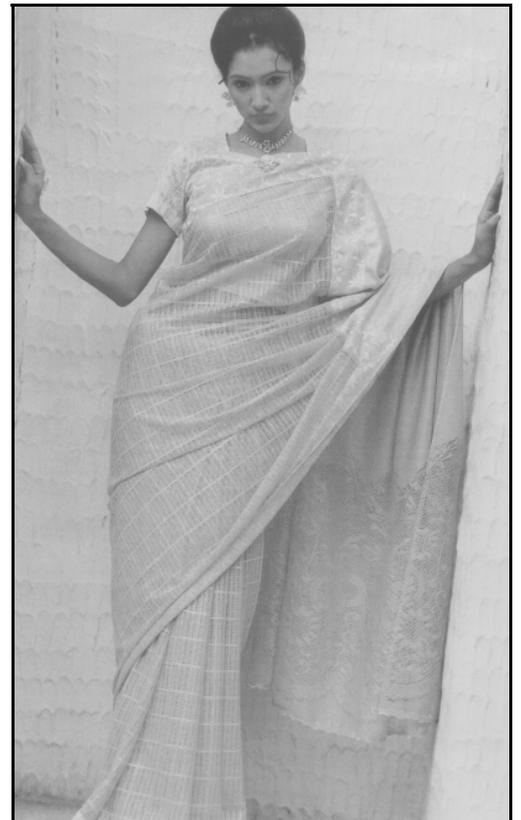
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About 15 years ago the modern day master of Shehnai, Ustad Bismillah Khan, performed before Her Holiness Shri Mataji Nirjala Devi (the founder of Sahaja Yoga) and a large audience of westerners in France. At the end of his concert, Ustad Khan's face was beaming, not only because he was eminently satisfied with his performance, but also because the audience was ecstatic! He exclaimed 'I am lost. I am sitting here playing Indian Classical music to a western audience but feel that I am in India. How is it that these people (the French) have such a great appreciation of my country's music?' Shri Mataji then explained to him that this is happening throughout the World to 1000s after getting self-realisation through Sahaja Yoga.

Many people would understand Ustad Khan's surprise, but this is something that would not have surprised me in the slightest. For many years now I have been to hundreds of Sahaja Yoga conferences and music festivals in Australia and overseas and I have experienced exactly the same phenomena amongst Sahaja Yogis from the world over. You name it - Americans, South Americans, Western and Eastern Europeans, Africans, people from all over Asia - wherever they practice Sahaja Yoga, they will love Indian music!

I think my own experience will describe how it happens for many Sahaja Yogis. When I first started Sahaja Yoga in 1992, I had no interest in Indian Music whatsoever. In fact you could say I detested it! However, after meditating for some time and growing in my self-realisation, I became increasingly aware of the ability to feel the Paramachaitanya (vibrations) on my central nervous system. I also became acutely aware that imbalances in my chakra system (nervous system) and external factors in the environment could affect my ability to feel vibrations, to be 'in meditation' and to remain in a balanced, spiritual state. When listening to various forms of music I discovered that certain forms were more beneficial to me and found that Indian music (classical, bhajans and qawwali included) is generally the most sublime. I naturally decided to listen to more of it and rarely listen to western music now at all. I must emphasise that this happened to me, not because someone told me to change, but because my Spirit demanded it (after obtaining self-realisation through Sahaja Yoga) and I listened!

I know that if a seeker of truth gives Sahaja Yoga a fair go, they will find that their Atma (Spirit) will become their master and will guide them to the most beautiful aspects of every culture on earth. It will benefit those who simply want to appreciate classical music as well as those who are already adept, as it will help them know their music from a totally new dimension, as did Greats like Debu Choudhary and others.

Andrew Perusco, Performer in the Sydney based group 'Sahaja Qawwal'

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# Foreward

It is with great humility that we are celebrating *Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar Evening* in the very first year of this new millennium, with salutations to Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar – the great composer. It is befitting that we have chosen the date for *Dikshitar* evening to coincide with *Deepavali*.

It is also a divine experience to be amongst various music *rasika*-s and to listen to the rendering of Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar's compositions. The aim of celebrating *Dikshitar Evening* has been to promote and enlighten works of Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar.

There are a number of people without whose help and guidance this event would not have taken place. While there have been a number of activities that had to be carried out to make this event occur, it has been a great challenge to co-ordinate and manage all activities.

From day one of planning, we have consulted with music lovers of Sydney, *Sangeetha Kalanidhi* Sri Nedanuri Krishnamurthy, and the co-ordinators of *Sydney Music Circle*, Sri Swathi Tirunal Jayanthi festival, *Rasikapriya* and *Pallavi*. We have tried to keep music lovers posted about the progress in organising the event. The response across the community has been very positive. Mail messages detailing the activities connected to the event, have gone to about 120 addresses – here in Australia, India, Japan and USA. Feedback from the recipients of these mail messages has been very encouraging. There is certainly a lot of collective knowledge and support amongst the music lovers in Sydney to make this a full-day event in the future.

We thank all the volunteers, musicians, people who gave advertisements, *Sydney Music Circle* for providing the microphone system, advisers, the master of ceremony, those who made financial contributions, those who contributed in the form of articles to the brochure, those who helped compiling the essence and gist of the songs, percussionists, office bearers of Veteran Car Club. Submission of articles, compiling gist of the songs has been done purely on voluntary basis, in support of suggestions from our well-wishers. We have received articles from overseas as well, which we have published in the brochure. It is a great feeling and experience to read the meanings of songs.

We are grateful to all of you for extending your support and co-operation. Please pardon us for any shortfalls or mistakes. Your feedback will help to improve similar events in the future.

We sincerely hope that *Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar Evening* will be a memorable evening. Wishing you all a very Happy Deepavali.

*Namaste*

*Giridhar Tirumalai & Radha Giridhar (Ph : 9746 7264)*  
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## MUTHUSWAMY DIKSHITAR - PARAMOTTAMA VAGGEYAKARA

By K. Raman

When we discuss about Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar, we have to make a passing reference to at least the great art of Carnatic music, which he very eminently propagated and personified. Carnatic music is formal, very much structured and hence quite rigorous in its methodology – more than other forms of Indian music. It has a chequered past and is built around a well-defined grammar, whereby practitioners all along stuck strictly to the rules. Even *prayogas* in *raga* are well-defined and those who violated the rigid grammar found themselves dubbed as gadflies and mavericks. Major contributions to Carnatic music came from the Musical Trinity (Thyagaraja, Dikshitar and Shyama Sastri). The songs of the venerable Trinity are priceless and these *bhava*-laden creative gems are sung in reverence till this day without the slightest deviation. The seminal masterpieces of these great saints are a perfect combination of *bhakti* and *gnana*, bound together in *alankara* with the felicity of musical expression. The *kriti* is always the principal vehicle for expressing the beauty and structure of the *raga*, which has the power to evoke emotion in the listener's mind. This is true in Carnatic music.

With this backdrop, let me elucidate and honour one-third part of the trinity viz Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar. He was the youngest of the musical trinity, born at Thiruvarur on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1776, which incidentally is the place of birth of the other two illustrious parts of the Trinity as well. I wonder how so much of genius originated from such a tiny bit of land. The Dikshitar family can be musically likened to the illustrious Bach family of Germany. The Dikshitar family were composing, singing, playing music as well as contributing richly in varied ways to Carnatic music from the middle of 18<sup>th</sup> century to the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

There is a story behind the origin of the name Muthuswamy. While at the Vaitheeswara Koil *sannidhi*, Ramaswamy Dikshitar, father of Muthuswamy, had a vision of goddess Balambika, who presented a pearl necklace to him. The name Muthu (pearl) is appropriate as suggestive of the divine gift. Ramaswamy practised veena under the tutelage of Venkita Vaidyanatha Dikshitar, who in turn was a descendant of Venkita Makhin (the Carnatic music grammarian extraordinaire who is credited of formulating the 72 *Raganga Raga* Scheme). Muthuswamy who lived for 59 years is generally regarded as the stalwart of the present day Carnatic music system and style. He has successfully immortalised Carnatic music with his great compositions. Muthuswamy acquired high proficiency in Sanskrit and Telugu very early in the piece and went through a rigorous training regime in vocal music and veena playing. As a young man, he made his first pilgrimage to Kashi (Varanasi) with his spiritual teacher, a saint called Chidambaranatha Yogi. During his 5 years sojourn at the holy city, he mastered the Hindustani system of music as well as worshipping the Lord, Kashi Viswanatha, with high intensity.

The slow *Dhrupad* style of North Indian music captivated him and it is amply reflected in his works like: Cheta Sri (Dvijawanthi) Balagopala (Bhairavi) Sri Rajagopala (Saveri) Meenakshi Me Mudam (Poorvikalyani) and Sri Subramanyaya Namasthe (Kambhoji). The influence of Hindustani music on Dikshitar is very clearly evident in compositions like 'Jambupathe' (Yamunakalyani).

Having reached Mantra siddhi and prior to leaving Kashi, he entered the river Ganga and a veena fell on his outstretched hands. This veena is special in that the *yalmukha* is upturned and on the bowl, 'Sri Ram' is clearly inscribed in Devanagari Script. The veena is still there in the house of Balaswamy Dikshitar, a descendant of Muthuswamy. On his return, he hastened to Thiruttani the abode of Karthikeya.

It is said that the Lord appeared in front of the great scholar, presented him with a piece of sugar candy and with this, Dikshitar burst forth a brilliant krithi, "Sreenathadi Guruguho" in raga Mayamalavagowla. Dikshitar generally composed the praise of deities of the shrines he visited. Music historians say that Syama Sastri influenced Dikshitar in the cult of Devi worship and we know the result.

Dikshitar's attitude as God's devotee was not highly emotional (unlike that of Thyagaraja) whereby there were no emotional surges, unlike the way Thyagaraja obviously displayed emotions in his musical creations. Dikshitar was highly inspired by Gnana and scholarship while Thyagaraja was engrossed in the bhakti aspect in his creations. Dikshitar created musical gems mainly in Sanskrit full of beautiful alliterations with impeccable and beautiful phrasing. We know for richness of sound and intonation Sanskrit is unmatched. To him Raga was not just a scale but a divine entity full of beauty, heavenly charm and adorability. His portrayal of ragas were precise, specific and rich. His songs are mostly in VILAMBITHAKALA – Slow tempo – rich in gamaka. He stood apart from others with his creations full of serenity, resourcefulness and at every facet of the music flow. His creations projected him as a master of form.

Most of his creative efforts reflect aesthetic excellence of the ragasancharas. As an erudite Sanskrit scholar, Dikshitar knew that there is grandiose and sublimity inherent in Sanskrit diction and the master craftsman in Dikshitar paid special attention to project its sound values. *Sabdalankara* – as *prasa*, *anuprasa* and specialised *alankaras* like *gopuchayathi* and *Srothavaha*. These are prominently evident in krithis like 'Thyagaraja yoga vaibhavan', 'Maye', Sri Varalakshmi and the like.

Another aspect Dikshitar projected with aplomb was his handling of Hindustani ragas faithfully to the original. His masterpieces like "Jambupathe" (Yamankalyani), Parimalaranganatham (Hamir Kalyani) Rangapuravihara (Brindavana Saranga) bear testimony to his skills in creating krithis in North Indian ragas. His outlook on music was so vast that he once composed a *Sanskrita Sahitya*, tuned and modified to render it in English. Thus "Santha pahimam Sangitha Shyamale..." came to be sung in English style. He did this on a very special request from Mr Brown, Collector of his district. *Karma*, *Bhakthi* and *Gnana* influenced Dikshitar's life and these are reflected in all his compositions. He spent the best part of his life at Thiruvarur. Famous among his large portfolio of compositions are *Kamalamba Nava Varna*, and *Navagraha* compositions.

Blessed by Lord Muruga, he adopted the *ankitham* of "Guru Guha". Since Guha (Subramanya) came as Guru at Tiruthani and initiated him into *Sangeetha Kavithvam*, his signature of Guru Guha appears in all his works.

He was a master of *Gopuchayathi*, Yati pattern usage. In Sri Varalakshmi Namasthubhyam (Sri Raga) See the Gopuchcha yati ....

Sri Sarasa Pade,  
Rasapade,  
Sapade,  
Pade.

See too in Maye Ivam yahi:

Sarasa Kaye  
Rasakaye  
Sakaye  
Aye

With sheer unmatched brilliance be it *sahitya*, language, Carnatic or Hindustani *raga*, Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar will always be remembered as a composer extraordinaire for all India and for all times.

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## Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar

By M. P. Ranganathan

Music, in general, plays a significant part in seeking refuge in God, thus making people to forget their desires and difficulties. Carnatic music has assimilated itself to South Indian culture, since a long time.

Carnatic music got a boost when the three talented composers viz Sri Shyama Sastri, Saint Thyagaraja and Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar also called as the "Trinity" flourished during the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. It was also regarded as 'the Golden Age' of Carnatic classical music. Their compositions form a class by themselves; those of Sri Shyama Sastri excel in intricate rhythmic patterns, those of Sri Thyagaraja in the happy blend of emotion and melody and those of Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar in their richness in portraiture of melodic beauty and variety.

Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar, the youngest of the classical trinity, has been honoured, in the world of Carnatic music, since his time, as a saintly composer, a profound poet and philosopher-musician. He was very fortunate to be initially trained in the intricacies of music by his father, Sri Ramaswamy Dikshitar, who was also a renowned musician in his time, gifted with a rich and sonorous voice. Sri Ramaswamy Dikshitar enjoyed royal patronage from the king of Tanjore and other wealthy music lovers. He has to his credit a large number of *tana varna-s*, *pada varna-s*, *ragamalika-s* and *kirtana-s*. The *ragamalika* in 108 ragas and talas is the magnum opus of his creative genius. Raga *Hamsadwani* is the creation of Ramaswamy Dikshitar. In reality, his compositions would have received far greater recognition and wider popularity had his son, Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar, not overshadowed him.

Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar was the eldest of four children of Sri Ramaswamy Dikshitar. He was encouraged to acquire profound learning in the ancient *saastras* and his father was responsible for imparting intensive training in the "*lakshya*" and "*lakshana*" aspects of Carnatic music. During his time, the East India Company had established firmly in India and at the instance of one English army officer, Sri Ramaswamy Dikshitar made his son to adopt veena as his instrument to play and assigned the violin (which was so far a western instrument) to his other son, Sri Balaswamy. What began as an experiment soon became a permanent feature of Carnatic music. Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar learnt tantric form of music, yoga, Vedanta as propounded by Sri Shankaracharya, in Kashi, with the help of Chidambaranatha Yogi, a friend of his father. During 6 years of his stay in Kashi, he was profoundly influenced by Hindustani music, which helped in his creative genius. This is amply evident in his handling of Hindustani ragas as well as applying this, in Carnatic songs in general.

Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar being a prolific composer has to his credit, hundreds of compositions and keertanaas mainly in Sanskrit. Besides there are five ragamalikas, a pada varnam and a daru. A few of them are what are known as Manipravala Compositions, the *sahitya* being in multiple languages. His kirtanas conveying *ragabhaava*, can be described as *raga alapana*, dressed in *sahitya* and artificially accommodated in the framework of *tala*.

Muthuswamy Dikshitar was a *vainikagayaka* i.e. he sang to the accompaniment of the veena. This is why his compositions are slow in tempo, ideally suited for the portrayal of ragas in all their beauty. He has used Mangala Kaishiki, Narayana Gowla, Gopika Vasantha, Saranganata, Chhaya gowla and many other old ragas effectively in his compositions. He is also reputed for his composition in groups, based on particular themes and one set among these is the Navagraha Keertanas, Another set of group compositions of Dikshitar is the most famous Navavarna Krithis based on the adoration of shaktis, through the workshop of Sri CHAKRA. Among the *Kirtanas*, he has composed in Yaman Kalyani (Yaman of Hindustani music) "Jambupathe Mampahi" stands unrivalled in regard to the richness of *ragabhava* and grandeur of style. "Parimala Ranganatham" in Hamir Kalyani is again a brilliant composition that brings out the salient features of the raga. "Chetha Sri Bala Krishnam" in Dwijavanthi is a magnificent edifice portraying the charming raga in all its varied colours.

After successful name and fame, it was appropriate that Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar cast off his mortal coils, amidst the singing of *kirtana* on sacred Devi "Meenakshi me mudam dehi" in raga Gamakakriya; even before completing 60 years. On the whole he left an indelible mark on the horizon of Carnatic music, thus completing the task of the last of the triumvirate of the Carnatic composers.

## ***Dikshitar – The Greatness of His Compositions***

By Sydney Srinivas

Listen to Dikshitar in 2001? Why? What is so great about his compositions that have withstood the test of time? This is a question I have asked of every well-known composer of Carnatic music.

He must be important; his compositions must have some intrinsic merit. Otherwise, there would not have been so many websites after him, more than one hundred in number.

People usually speak of his *Navagraha kritis* and *Navavarana kritis*. It is true that Dikshitar has composed on many forms of Devi such as *Kamakshi*, *Meenakshi* and others; he has taken us on a pilgrimage to Kanchi, Kalahasthi, Benares and other places. In fact, the well-known TV serial *Swara Bhooshani* used his compositions to introduce some of the shrines and the myth behind them. Does his greatness lie here? I do not think so. But there are many who would like to listen to his music for this reason. They are welcome to do so.

Dikshitar is no stranger to anyone who has listened to Carnatic music even once or twice in his lifetime. He is the composer whose *Vathapi Ganapathim* starts off many-a-concert. Also, I cannot forget the greatest service he has done to listeners who argue: what raga is this? He has somehow fused the name of the raga into the words of the composition. You need to listen to it carefully. This is a gift not only to the listener but to the concert critic as well! He can boldly mention the raga in his review. There is no ambiguity!

A general look at his compositions shows that he does not plead like Thyagaraja – as in *Marugelara?* or *Brova Barama?* Nor does he question God – *Evarikai Avathara?* Nor insult him, *Manamu Leda?* He does not go to a deity in despair, like Syama Shastri's *Devi brova samayamide*. There is no rapport personal with God or Goddess. This partly comes from the language he uses, Sanskrit. It is well recognised that current and lively feelings cannot be effectively conveyed in that language.

Instead, his compositions are like an orthodox Brahmin with all religious marks on his body that sits in front of an idol and performs his Pooja in a traditional manner. Out comes the procession of grand words – *Akalanka darpana kapola vishesha*, *Mana matrike maye*, *marakata chaye*, *Devi Shakthi beejodbhava matrikarna swaroopini*, *Kom-lakara pallava pada kodanda Rama*, etc. Sometimes we have the rhyming and ringing words – *Shyamalanga*, *vihanga*, *sadayapanga satsanga*.

This itself could be one reason why his compositions are great. Such words and such rhyme are themselves beautiful although they may have no emotional content whatsoever.

Let me now make a bold statement. He is great because he exposes the raga to the utmost, such that it surrounds you and captivates you. You experience the length and breadth of the raga when you listen to his compositions. He offers us a splendid portrayal of the raga. It does not matter of which God he sings or which place he glorifies – he exploits music itself more than anything else. This is his uniqueness.

A good example is *Rangapura vihara* in Brindavana Saranga. Next time you listen to this forget that it is about Rama, forget that it is about the temple at Srirangam, forget the mythology. Just think that it is Brindavana Saranga raga. The sweeps and flights that Dikshitar gives in this composition will give you an exciting dip into the raga. I agree that much will also depend on the performer. A poor performer can, of course, ruin the experience.

I should be careful. Does it not happen with other composers? It could. Sure, any good composition by others brings out the intricacies of the raga in which it is composed but with Dikshitar it happens fully, to a degree not found in others. I feel if one has to appreciate the full effect of a raga, the full feeling of it, all the shades of it, one has to listen to a Dikshitar composition in that raga.

So much so that *Chetha Sri* in Dvijavanthi, *Mamava Pattabhi Rama* in Manirangu, *Bhajare Ni Chitha* in Kalyani, *Bala Gopala* in Bhairavi have almost become the benchmarks for those ragas. Let us leave it for musicologists to work out the analysis. But do listen to a good rendering of these. You will experience some pure and abstract music. Is this the reason people have called him “the Bach of Carnatic Music”? Maybe, I am not sure.

## Muthuswamy Dikshitar: Gnanam and Bhakti are one and the same

By Hari Raman

Towards the memory of this great composer, sage, and musical prodigy, let us examine a few salient features of his life.

The Dikshitar pentad comprises of: Ramaswami Dikshitar and his sons Muthuswamy Dikshitar, Chidambara Dikshitar, Balaswami Dikshitar and Balaswami's adopted son, Subbarama Dikshitar. 'Dikshit' literally means one who is initiated into *Sri Vidya Upasana* – the systematic worship of 'Devi' (the Divine Mother). Ramaswami and his sons were keen followers of *Sri Vidya Upasana* and hence they became the Dikshitar family of musicians.

Apart from this heritage, which brought in a great *Sanchari Bhava* or in modern concept a bank balance of extraordinary perception, Dikshitar had a miraculous origin. God appears often in dreams and commands parents to undertake severe austerities at the end of which He announces the birth of an imminent soul or incarnation. Other members of this category in contemporary great musicians are Thyagaraja, Syama Sastri, the Vaishnava Saint, Desikar, and the Telugu composer, Kshetrappa. According to traditional accounts, the birth of Muthuswamy was due to the blessing of Lord Muthukumaraswamy of Vaitheeswaran Koil, to whom parents offer special prayers for the birth of a son. The progenitor of this illustrious family, Sri Ramaswami Dikshitar, was himself a great scholar in Sanskrit, Telugu and Carnatic music. Muthuswamy Dikshitar was born in 1775 at Tiruvurur, in those days a great seat for learning, especially in Sanskrit and *Vedanta*.

With scholarship and a legacy of music in his blood, Muthuswamy completed his study of Sanskrit and all subjects while still in his teens and acquired enough proficiency in Telugu to serve the needs of music, which became a passion of his life. His father put him through rigorous training in vocal music and veena. Before he was sixteen he had mastered the text of the *Vedas*. His knowledge of Sanskrit literature was wide and profound, with a deep understanding of prose, poetry, and grammar. To these he added considerable proficiency in astrology, medicine, *mantra sastra* and *agama sastra*.

It is indeed a rare phenomenon – a profound scholar, a poet and composer of the highest order, a mastersinger, and a natural mystic. One cannot comprehend how these elements came to be combined in one individual in one lifetime.

The spiritual teacher, Chidambaranatha Yogi, stayed in Manali and spotted the requisite potential in Muthuswamy and took him as his *sisya* (pupil). The yogi was not only a friend to Dikshitar but also his guide and spiritual *guru* (teacher). He initiated Dikshitar into the mysteries of *Sri Vidya Mahamantra*, furthering him to delve deep into his own soul. The yogi took him to Varanasi, where Dikshitar stayed for 5 years doing penance and studying the mystery of *Sri Vidya*. Through the highest level of devotion and knowledge, Dikshitar earned the blessings of the Divine mother, Devi. Dikshitar, now transformed into a *Mahapurusha*, was then sent into the world to take up his mission, blazing his torch of wisdom and *bhakti*, via divine music.

At the insistence of his guru, Dikshitar moved over to Tirutani with his family. He sat meditating at the shrine that Chandiyoga Sruti says is the favourite spot of Lord Subramanya's manifestations. Worshipping and constantly meditating on Lord Guha, resulted in Lord Chengalvaraya (Muruga) appearing before him in the form of an old sage. Dikshitar felt a piece of sugar candy in his mouth and the vision melted away before his very eyes. Muthuswamy felt the divine presence of the Lord, and burst out with song. His first song "Srinathadi Guruguho Jayati" came out in Mayamalavagowla. Thereafter 'Guruguha' a synonym of Lord Subramanya became the signature of his lyrics. The essence of the term 'Guruguha' is the 'cave in the heart.' He derived inspiration from Lord Subramanya, who resided in this cave of his heart.

Among the Carnatic music trinity, Dikshitar was the greatest traveller. This experience and profound practice of *Sri Vidya* worship resulted in the arousal of '*Kundalini Sakthi*' in Dikshitar. Integrated with his scholarly knowledge of music and *Vedanta*, he was a great *advaitin* and *gnani*. He was able to relate to all deities of the Hindu pantheon. His songs breathed the themes of both *Nirgunopasana* and *Sugonopasana* – in other words the absolute or *Parabrahman* is worshipped in both *Suganna* and *Nirguna* forms. He is *Vaktyarupa* and various Gods and Goddesses are only manifestations of that *Parabrahman* who is formless, nameless, and attribute-less. In this lofty state of consciousness, he was able to bring forth *kritis*, in dignified Sanskrit, on whatever deity he contemplated upon. Countless Sanskrit compositions were composed in a variety of *ragas*, which scintillate like jewels in each and every name of the presiding deities of the pilgrim centres he visited. This he combined with his qualities of *Vagyeyakara* – a lyrical master of *vag* (words) and *geya* (music).

Dikshitar's treatment of *ragas* is unique and extraordinary. He meditated on the Divine form of *ragas* bringing out the most beautiful phrases in an extraordinary manner. His style of *Vilambit kala* (slow paced) composition was well-suited to reflect the meditative mood of the *raga*. As an example, 'Balagopala', a great masterpiece, while portraying the beauty of the divine child, Krishna, is an excellent exposition of *Bhairavi raga* itself – thus bringing about the interplay of melody and content. The rhythm is subtle, the verse, divine. Here it is not amiss to mention that he also tried to incorporate the name of the *raga* in most of his *kritis*.

He brought out the salient features of *mantra* and *tantra* of *shakta* schools in his stupendous compositions that relate to the movements of Hindu worship. His style embraced *bhakti bhava* (devotion), and the quintessence of *raga-bhava*. It is commonly known that as the milky ocean of music was churned, Saint Thyagaraja skimmed over the cream and sang songs with ease and great *bhakti*, while Dikshitar dived deep and brought out corals and pearls.

The eternal sweetness of coconut water, which is attained after removing confusion, negativity of the husk and breaking the hard shell of the ego, to merge into the supreme state of *Ananda* (bliss). This is the main quality of his music. His *kritis* are complex yet very movingly melodious. The sweetness of Dikshitar is reflected in the famous *Pancha-Linga Kritis*, *Navagraha Kritis* and the unassailable masterpiece, the *Navavarna kritis* on Devi Parameswari – both the Kamalamba & Abhayamba Navaavarnas.

In conclusion, in the midst of many other pieces of enlightened articles that have come in, added to the rendering of Dikshitar Kritis, I would like to reinforce this idea of Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar, who believed and practised that *gnana* (wisdom) and *bhakti* (devotion) are one and the same. All his *kritis* represent that *raga-devata* installed by him in the sanctum sanctorum is worshipped through rituals that really constitute the *ragaswarupa*. He did not ask for any personal boons. He only sang to extol the beauty and grandeur of the Divine form with such great *bhakti* that miracles had to happen!

Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar can be compared with Bach, Michelangelo, Dante and Milton and his contribution to the music world goes beyond words. As long as there is *nada* (sound), it is the duty of every musician to pay homage to Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar.

## **Notes on Compositions Rendered**

### **Akshaya Lingavibho** *Sankarabharanam raga, Misra Chapu tala*

Oh Lord Shiva, who self manifests and who is in the form of a linga that is eternal and undecaying! Lord of the countless universes! Protect me Oh auspicious one! Resident of the Badari (Jujube) forest, in the company of the Goddess! Lord of Bhadrakali! Enjoying the music of Tumburu! Arising out of the syllable "Hrim"! Lord of the Golden Meru Mountain!

Notes: This kriti is on the presiding deity at Kivalur. The kriti mentions the name of the Goddess and also the timing of the annual festival. The kriti, one of Dikshitar's best, was composed when the temple priests refused to open the doors claiming that it was too late to offer darshan. However, by the time Dikshitar had sung the piece, the doors opened by themselves. This is similar to the incident Thyagaraja experienced at Tirupati where he sang "Teratiyagarada" and the curtain spontaneously opened.

### **Anandanatana Prakasham** *Kedaram raga, Misra Chapu tala*

I take refuge in the beloved of Shivakamavalli! His dance is effulgent and is bliss! He is the Lord of the Cosmic Hall at Chidambaram.

Notes:

This song praises Lord Nataraja and has some beautiful sollukattu swaras at the end. According to Hindu cosmology, the universe consists of five elements earth, fire, water, air and ether. God is imminent all these elements.

Dikshitar has composed a set of krithis known as the 'Pancha Linga Kshetra krithis' – five sacred places where Lord Shiva exists in these primordial forms. At Chidambaram He is Akasa linga (ether), at Thiruvannamalai He is in the form of Agni (fire), at Kalahasti He is Vayu (air), at Kanchipuram He is Prithvi (earth) and at Jambukeshwaram (near Trichy) He is in the form of Appu (water).

### **Annapurnai** *Sama raga, Adi tala*

You are the essence of this Universe. Bless me. Om karineye! You reside at a place called Kuzhikarai. You are the remover of evil! Lord Shiva's Queen. Purani! Parameswari!. You hold a gold vessel with payasam in it and a gold ladle. You wear the most precious gold jewellery and silk ornaments. You are worshipped by Narada, Bramha and you support me, Guruguhan. This song is about Kuzhikarai Annapoornai Visalakshi.

### **Bala Gopala** *Bhairavi raga, Adi tala*

Protect me! Child Gopala! You are the ocean of mercy! You are always benevolent to your devotees. Your body is dark like a rain bearing cloud. Your hands are like lotuses and you create incomparable joy. You took on the role of a cowherd and performed many pranks. You carry a flute and were once tied to a pestle.

Notes: Composed at the Mannargudi shrine of Sri Vidya Rajagopala, this song is considered a roll call of all that happened in Krishna's life. This is also the song where Dikshitar calls himself a Vainika and a singer.

### **Diwakara Tanujam** *Yadukula kambhoji raga, Adi tala*

I always meditate upon the slow moving Saturn. The song goes on to describe the specific features attributed to *Sani Bhagavan*.

Notes: Sani (Saturn) is the son of Surya (the Sun God) and Chayadevi, the shadow. Yama, the God of Death, is the brother of Sani.

This is one of the *Navagraha krithis* – songs in praise of the nine planets. Within the inner courtyard of Thyagarajaswami's temple, there are the Nine Planets (Nava Graha-s). Among Dikshitar's dear pupils at the temple was Thambiappan, who played the Suddhamaddalam, which is the only kind of drum that could be used before Lord Thyagaraja. Thambiappan was afflicted with an acute pain in the stomach, which could not be treated medically. Hearing this, Dikshitar examined his horoscope and found out that it was due to the adverse influence exerted by Jupiter at that time, and that, to get relief, it was necessary to propitiate that planet. Desiring to cure him of the pain, Dikshitar sang a song on "Guru" and conceived that it would be useful to compose a group of songs on all the Planets, as that would benefit all mankind. It is said that Thambiappan learnt the kriti "Bhihaspathe" and sang it regularly and was cured of his illness.

The *Navagraha krithi*-s are a testament to Dikshitar's knowledge about Astrology. In this song he stresses that Sani is not an evil planet and if properly placed in one's horoscope can give outstanding benefits.

**Hiranmayim** Lalitha raga, Rupaka tala

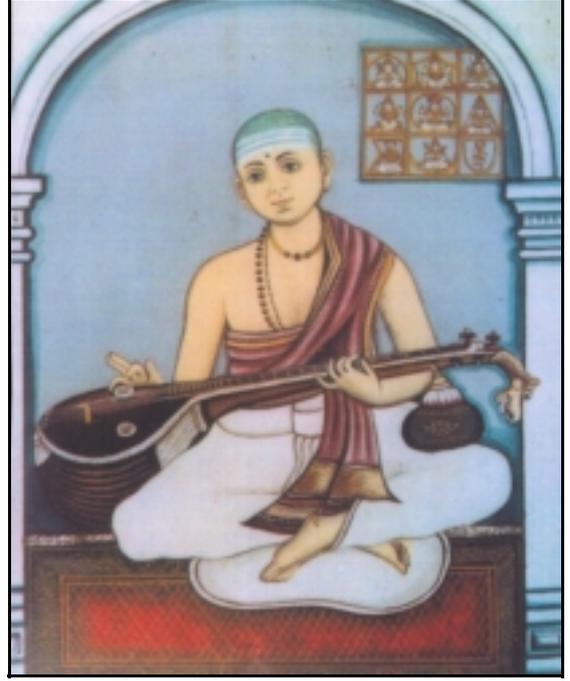
I sing about the Golden form of Lakshmi and will henceforth never sing the praises of weak mortals. She provides permanent wealth and is the daughter of the Ocean of Milk.

Notes: This song was composed in Tiruvarur. Dikshitar's wife had complained about their poverty and was goading her husband to seek the favour of the King. He composed this song as a lesson to her and as a prayer to Lakshmi. The Goddess appeared in the dreams of Dikshitar's wife and advised her. The lady was suitably chastened and in gratitude, Dikshitar composed Mangaladevataya Tvaya in Dhanyasi.

**Kailasanathena** Kambhoji raga, Misra Chapu tala

I am well protected by Sri Kailasanatha (Lord Shiva), Who excels in giving *kaivalya* (salvation) to His devotees.

Notes: This kriti is on the presiding deity at the Kailasanatha Temple, Kanchipuram. The raga name is in the words: "sadgati daayakaambhoja charanena"



**Kamalambam Bhajare** Kalyani Raga, Adi Tala

O mind, worship Kamalamba and reject worldly desires, thereby destroying delusion, the root cause.

Notes: This is the second *Avarana* kriti. It consists of sixteen petals and is called *sarvasha paripuraka chakra*, the fulfiller of all desires. The deity presiding over this *chakra* is called *Tripureshi*. The *yoginis* in this *avarana* are collectively called *gupta yogini*, which means that they are hidden or not manifest. The Kamalamba temple is situated at Thiruvavur. For more details see the article on the Navavarna kritis, elsewhere in this publication.

**Kanjadalayataksi** Kamalamanohari raga, Adi tala

One who restored cupid by a mere glance! One whose eyes are like lotus petals! Dear friend of Lakshmi! Most beautiful in the three worlds! Possessing a majestic gait akin to an elephant! Possessing feet, which are decorated with bells! Protect me.

Notes: This kriti is on Goddess Kamakshi at Kanchipuram. The raga name Manohari is in the pallavi. The raga is now called Kamala Manohari, thanks to this kriti. In this kriti, Goddess Kamakshi is referred to as Lakshmi's friend. In keeping with this, the Goddess is praised as wearing raiment of gold, residing in a pavilion of gems, giver of wealth, protector of cupid and is compared to the lotus in many places. Compare this with the kriti *Saraswati manohari* in the raga of that name on the same Goddess by Muthuswamy Dikshitar, where many terms appropriate to Saraswati are used. The lines describing the Goddess as the parrot in the cage called Shiva, signify that she is the Supreme Being on whom even Shiva meditates.

**Mahaganapathim** Nattai raga, Adi Tala

I pray Lord Maha Ganapati, who is respected by the Maha Devas. You like *kaavya*, *natakam* and the like. You have the rat – *mooshakam* – as your vehicle. You like *modakam* very much.

Notes: This song is usually rendered as the very first or the second song of a Carnatic Music concert. By rendering this song, the artiste is praising Lord Ganapathi – who will ensure that the concert or any activity will proceed without any obstacles.

**Mamava Meenakshi** Varali raga, Misra Chapu tala

Protect me O Meenakshi! O Princess Matangi! Holding an emerald studded Veena in your hand! Sweet voiced one, with tresses like a collection of black bees!

Notes: This kriti is on Goddess Meenakshi at Madurai. The raga name is in the pallavi. The song mentions the Digvijaya Utsavam that takes place during the annual festivities at the temple. It is said, that Goddess Meenakshi sets out as the Princess of Madurai to conquer the world and during the process meets Shiva and marries him. Kadambavana is another name for Madurai. Shiva in Madurai is referred to as Sundareshwara.

**Mamava Pattabhi Raama** *Manirangu raga, Misra Chapu tala*

Rama of the great bow, ever auspicious, seated on the throne with Anjaneya at your feet. With soft lotus feet, the acme of human perfection, you are ever auspicious. Wafted by chaamara, held by Bharatha, Laxmana, Satrugna, served by Vibhishana, Sugriva and others with blessings of great sages such as Athri, Vasishtha. Seated in many coloured mantapa on the rare jem studded throne with consort Sita, of spotless purity, who appeared in the solar line of kings for protection of the earth.

Notes: Certain kritis have acquired supremacy as expositions of particular raga. Mamava Pattabhirama" is to Manirangu what "Marivere" of Shyama Sastry is to Ananda Bhairavi and "Janani" of Subbaya Sastri is to Rithigowla.

**Meenakshi me Mudem** *Gamakakriya raga, Adi tala*

Goddess with the fish like eyes! With a golden complexion! Royal daughter of Sage Matanga! Give me true bliss.

Notes: This kriti is composed on the Goddess at Madurai. The raga, Gamakakriya is the 53rd melakarta in the *asampoorna* raga scheme. It is now commonly known as Poorvikalyani. Legend has it that as Dikshitar departed from this world he requested to his disciples to sing this kriti, in particular the line "*meenalochni paashamochni*".

**Neelakantam Bhajeham** *Kedaragowla raga, Rupaka tala*

I offer obeisance to Lord Nilakantha constantly. Brahma and others worship Him.

**Neerajakshi Kamakshi** *Hindola raga, Rupaka tala*

O Lotus eyed Kamakshi, with dark tresses a kin to clouds! Queen of the Three Worlds! Protect me!

Notes: This *krithi* is on Goddess Kamakshi at Kanchipuram. The raga name is in the charanam line: "*gaurihindoladyuti hiramanimayabharane*".

**Panchashatpitarupini** *Devagandharam raga, Adi tala*

O Rajarajeswari! Resident of the fifty famous shrines! Protect me! One who comprises the fifteen syllabled mantra! Daughter of the Pandya King! Sister of Vishnu! Giver of auspicious boons! Redeemer of Indra from the curse of the sages! Pleased by the raga Devagandhara! Established in Bhava, Raga and Tala! Giver of desired boons to devotees!

Notes: This raga is usually known as *Karnataka Devagandhari* or *Abheri* and is a janyam of *Kharaharapriya*. In Dikshitar's version of *Abheri* (as in the song "Vinabheri") the *Dhaivatham* is different and hence is a janya of *Natabhairavi*.

**Ramachandram Bhavayami** *Vasanta raga, Rupaka tala*

I worship Srirama, the best of the Raghus, the younger brother of Indra (in His incarnation as Vamana).

I worship the Lord of Sita, the daughter of the Earth. The giver of prosperity and liberation. The one that helps those who chant His name to cross over the ocean of Samsara. The revered one, the one that gets rid of delusion.

The one who lives in the city of Saketa (Ayodhya) ,The one that bestowed the kingdom of devotion to Hanuman, The one whose face is like the fullmoon.The God who has all the pleasing good qualities.The one born in the line of Kakutstha and the one who is very intelligent, the lotuseyed, the abode of Sri Lakshmi; the one worshipped by Indra (the Lord of Heaven) and the one who pleases Guruguha (the Guru of all men)

**Ramanatham Bhajeham** *Kasiramakriya raga, Rupaka tala*

General meaning:

I offer my obeisance to Lord Ramanatha (Shiva), who was worshipped by Lord Ramachandra.

Notes: This *krithi* is on the presiding deity at Rameswaram. The *krithi* has details of a number of features of the shrine. The name of the Goddess is given as also that of the sea, which is the holy waterbody for the shrine (*Koti*). The legend of Rama worshipping there to absolve himself of the sin of killing Ravana is depicted. Monkeys worshipped the Lord as part of Rama's entourage.

This raga, the 51st *melakarta*, is more commonly called *Pantuvrali* or *Kamavardhini*.

### **Santhanagopala Krishnam** *Khamas raga, Rupaka tala*

I worship Santana Gopalakrishna! He is an expert in granting the boon of progeny! He is eternal! He is worshipped by Subrahmanya and his hands are like lotus flowers!

Notes: This *kriti* is on the deity at Mannargudi. The Sanatana Gopala idol is placed in the laps of those seeking progeny and then worshipped. It is believed that such couples bear children shortly.

### **Sarasa dalanayana** *Khamas raga, Tripura tala*

Lotus eyed Hari! Remover of obstacles! Govinda! Protect me! Your form is worshipped by Brahma and others! Beloved of Lakshmi! Auspicious one! Destroyer of Mura! Protector! Jewel of the Yadava Clan! Beloved of Lakshmi!

Notes: This *kriti* is on the deity at Mannargudi. The raga name is in the line : "*maghamaasotsava prabhava*".

### **Shakti sahita Ganapathim** *Sankarabharanam raga, Adi tala-Tisra Gati*

I contemplate the Lord of the Ganas, who is with his Shakti! He is worshipped by Shiva and others! He is worshipped by the King of the Gods and sages who are devoid of attachment! He nourishes his devotees! He is the son of Lord Shiva and is second to none! He grants prosperity and salvation! He is bedecked with jewels!

Notes: This is a one of the *Nottu Swara Sahityas* of Dikshitar. It is a composition based on Western types of melodic music. Dikshitar was probably inspired to compose this by the East India Company Band. The simple melody is capable on being played on any instrument.

### **Siddhi Vinayakam** *Chamaram raga, Rupaka tala*

I adore Vinayaka, who spells success, who is the reputed leader of the *ganas* and who grants special boons.

Notes: This is one of the sixteen *krithi*-s that Dikshitar has composed on Lord Ganesha. Apart from the descriptions of the Elephant-headed Lord, there is reference in the *Charanam* section to Lord Krishna who was born under the star of Rohini and the episode of the *Syamanthaka Mani* (a rare gem having a magical quality). Krishna was accused of acquiring this gem by unjust means. Krishna is said to have worshipped Vinayaka to ward off this accusation and clear himself.

The *raga Chamaram* is commonly known as *Shanmukhapriya*. The raga name is beautifully woven into the line "*Chathra chamarapari vijitham*".

### **Sri Kamalambikayam** *Sahana raga, Tisra Tripura tala*

I am devoted to Sri Kamalambika who is the garden of kalpa trees to those who seek refuge in Her. The Goddess is *candika* who with rage destroys enemies. She is the Mother of the universe.

Notes: The seventh *Avarana* is called *sarva roga hara chakra*, the remover of all diseases. It is an eight-cornered figure. Its location is within the previous *sarva rakshakara chakra* and just outside the primary inverted triangle. The deity presiding over this *chakra* is *Tripurasiddha* and the *yoginis* are collectively called *rahasya yogini*. Ignorance of one's true self is the greatest disease that can afflict man. The destruction of ignorance is the panacea for all ills. This, the 7th *chakra*, destroys the greatest disease, i.e., ignorance, hence *sarva roga hara chakra*.

### **Sri Krishnam** *Thodi raga, Adi tala*

Chant the name of Krishna all the time, Oh mind! He protects those who seek him. He is the child that protected the cows. His feet are worshipped by the Gods led by Indra. He removes fear, sorrow and lust. He helps us in crossing this world. His eyes are like lotus petals. He reclines on a banyan leaf. He is the protector of the universe.

Notes: This grand *krithi* in *Thodi* is about Lord Krishna at Guruvayoor, Kerala.

**Sri Lakshmi Varaham** *Abhogi raga, Adi tala*

I worship Sri Lakshmi Varaha (Vishnu in the Boar Incarnation) who is with Lakshmi and gives happiness to those who take refuge in Him.

Notes: About the presiding deity at Kallidaikurichi, Tirunelveli District. Reference is made to the temple on the banks of the Tamrapani River. The raga name is beautifully woven in the charanam line "*Mangalayabhogiyutapadam*."

**Sri Mathru Bhootham** *Kannada raga, Misra Chapu tala*

I reflect upon Sri Matrubuteshwara in my heart. He is the Lord of Trisiragiri and is in the company Sugandhi Kuntalamba.

Notes: The kriti is on Matrubhuteswara, the presiding deity at Tiruchi Rock Fort. The Lord here is said to have donned the garb of a Chettiyar lady to help a young lady in childbirth, whose mother could not come due to floods in the Kaveri.

In Vedanta, it is believed that Godhead is arrived at by crossing nine sheaths, which are the five elements plus emotion, ego, intellect and finally knowledge. This is referred to in the kriti. The raga name is in the line: "*shukasanakam nalakAmAdivijaya*". Dikshitar makes use of the principle in Sanskrit whereby 'la' can be used in place of 'da'.

**Sri Nathadi Guruguho** *Mayamalava Gowla raga, Adi tala*

May Guha, the Guru of Vishnu and others, be victorious! May he be victorious! O mind! Always chant and contemplate that you are the blissful one.

Notes: Said to be Dikshitar's first composition. Set in the raga Mayamalavagowla, which is also the raga in which students begin their music education. It is about Lord Subramanya at Tirutani. Dikshitar has composed a set of 8 kritis known as the 'Vibhakti Kritis'. Sri Nathadi is the first of the Vibhakti Kritis. This extols the lakshanas of an ideal Sri Vidya guru and reflects the supremacy of the Guru. Each line of the charana interestingly begins with the syllable 'Ma'. He describes 'Guru' as one who is free from the bonds of Maya (illusion) and as the one who resides in the Sahasraara Kamala situated in the top most part of the head. Another interesting prayoga in this kriti is that the first line of pallavi begins with arohana and avarohana of the raga and also fits in 3 kalas of rhythm.

**Sri Parthasarathina** *Sudha Dhanyasi raga, Rupaka tala*

We always worship the omnipotent Lord Krishna. Gopikas enjoy the melodious music flowing from the flute of Parthasarathy who is also worshipped by Rukmani in her heart eternally. We salute the great Lord whose abode is Vaikunda surrounded by the celestial Sage Narada with his thambur and other great Rishis.

Notes: In the Kurukshetra war, Lord Krishna was the charioteer for Arjuna who was also called Partha, hence the name Parthasarathy.

**Sri Satyanarayananam** *Shivapantuvarali raga, Adi tala*

Let us contemplate on Lord Satyanarayana constantly. He is of the form of Truth, Knowledge & Bliss and pervades everywhere as Lord Vishnu.

Notes: This kriti is on Lord Vishnu at Badrinath. In the Vamana incarnation, Lord Vishnu took the form of a dwarf Brahmaccharin and asked for three steps of land measured by his own feet from Mahabali, the king of the *Rakshasa*-s. Despite the entreaties of Sukra, his preceptor who recognised who the dwarf was, Mahabali promised the land. The dwarf then became a giant and in one stride had measured the earth and in another the heavens. He then asked Mahabali as to where the third measure was to come from. Mahabali asked the Lord to place his foot on his own head. The Lord did so and pushed Mahabali into the nether world. This is the story behind the line "*vatuveshadharinam*".

The business community worships Lord Satyanarayana. So also do childless couples. This is the significance of the lines "*vaishyajaati kaaranam*" and "*vasupradaana nipunam*" respectively.

Muthuswamy Dikshitar may have visited the shrine when he stayed at Varanasi in the company of Chidambaranatha Yogi. The kriti of course was composed much later. The raga, widely used in Hindustani, is apt for a temple in North India. The raga, now called Subha Pantuvarali, is the 45th melakartha.

**Sri Vishwanatham** *Chaturdasa ragamalika (Sri, Arabhi, Gowri, Nattai, Gowla, Mohanam, Sama, Lalitha, Bhairavam, Saranga, Sankarabharanam, Kambhoji, Devakriya, Bhupalam) Adi tala*

This grand composition is in praise of Sri Viswanatha, the spouse of Vishalakshi. The 14 ragas signify the 14 lokas sheltered and protected by the almighty. Dikshitar hails the glory of Lord Viswanatha – the diety of Kasi.

Notes: This is a necklace of 14-raga gems – woven with pure devotion by Dikshitar. Music scholars have written about the fact that this song has references to not only to Lord Vishwanatha but also to the transmigration of souls, Bramha, Lord Krishna, Chants of Samaveda and different forms of Shiva. The name of each raga is brilliantly introduced into each verse.

**Thyagaraja Namaste** *Begada raga, Rupaka tala*

Salutations! Salutations to Thyagaraja! Beloved of Katyayani! Lord of living beings! Enthroned like a monarch!

Notes: This is one of the *vibhakti* kritis on Thyagaraja (Lord Shiva), the presiding deity at Tiruvarur. The kriti has many clear details about the idol. The throne is one of the symbols associated with this idol. The other items are the lotus garland, a staff and a sword. Dikshitar calls Thyagaraja *Simhaasanapate*. The idol is said to be Somaskanda (Shiva with Uma and Skanda). But we can only see the faces of Shiva and Uma (called Kondiammai in the local tradition). The feet are visible only on select occasions during the year. Hence, the line that the lotus feet are worshipped by Brahma and the Gods (not visible to man).

**Thyagaraja Yogavaibhavam** *Ananda Bhairavi raga, Rupaka tala*

Immersed in the grandeur of Raja Yoga, Thyagaraja (Lord Shiva) is my refuge.

Notes: Parvathi, daughter of Himavan, the King of mountains, wanted to marry Lord Shiva whose normal appearance is that of an ascetic. For this purpose, the Lord took the form of a King. Usually Lord Shiva appears in the form of a Linga in all the temples but in Tiruvarur the idol is in a human form, as Thyagaraja, with all royal grandeur. This kriti is in praise of that form of Lord Shiva.

This song is best known for the poetic devices that Dikshitar has used. In the *pallavi* section, the line “*Thyagaraja Yoga Vaibhavam*” cascades down like the shape of a cow’s tail. This is known as *Gopuchayathi*. Each step has a different meaning, describing the attributes of Lord Shiva.

The reverse, where the sentence widens like a river, occurs in the Charanam on the line “*Shiva sakthyaadi sakala thathva svarupa prakaasam*”. This technique is known as *Srothavaha*.

**Varalakshmi Bhajare** *Sourashtra raga, Adi tala*

Oh Mind! Chant the name of Varalakshmi! She will give all that is desired and will grant boons! She has lotus like feet!

Notes: The kriti is on Varalakshmi. The kriti has the raga name explicitly in the charanam. There is subtle humour in the kriti, where Dikshitar says that Lakshmi delights those who have no desires!

**Vathapi Ganapathim** *Hamsadhwani raga, Adi tala*

I sing about Vathapi Ganapathi, who has the face of an elephant and is a giver of boons.

Notes: This *krithi* is one of the sixteen Ganapati *krithi*-s composed by Dikshitar, all of which were composed in Tiruvarur. The name ‘Vathapi Ganapathi’ is because Sage Agastya is said to have prayed to this idol, before killing the demons Vathapi and Illvala. The idol is originally said to have been in the Chalukyan Capital of Vathapi, from where it is said to have been brought to South India.

This particular composition is one of the most famous *krithi*-s in Carnatic music. The raga Hamsadhwani is said to be a creation of Muthuswamy Dikshitar’s father, Ramaswamy Dikshitar.

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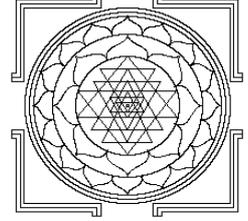
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# NAVAVARNA KRITHIS OF SRI MUTHUSWAMY DIKSHITAR

By Mythili Malli Iyer

The *Navavarna Krithis* are the monumental compositions left to us as a legacy by Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar. They are unique among the other compositions since, apart from their musical excellence, have a religious significance of their own. These krithis constitute an important group as they expound the worship of *Devi Kamalamba* in accordance with *Sri Vidya cult*, known as the *Tantras*. This form of worship has been in vogue from very ancient times and has inspired many sages, poets and musicians. It has developed a specialised form of rituals consisting in the worship of *Sri Chakra*. The *Sri Chakras* consist of nine enclosures which form the distinct objects of worship having their own separate *Yoginis* and *Shakthis* which are the manifestations of Devi. Passing through these nine enclosures or avarnas, we come to the innermost called the *Bindhu* wherein the *Devi Lalitha Thripurasundhari* is enshrined. The importance and the great power of *Sri Chakram* is clearly expressed in Adi Sankara's *Soundharyalahari* and *Lalitha Sahasranamam*. *Devi Katkamala stotram* clearly explains all about *Sri Chakram*, nine *chakrams*, *chakreswaris*, *yoginis* and *Sidhdhis*.

The *Navavarna pooja* has to be initiated by someone who is proficient in the *tantras*. But the credit goes to Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar for paving the way for all the devotees to know the greatness of *Sri Vidya cult* through his compositions, which can be easily understood by everyone. The *Navavarna krithis* are in praise of *Sri Kamalamba* in Thiruvaarur and represent the worship of Devi according to the *Sri Vidya cult*. To understand the full significance of these *krithis* one should have some knowledge about the *tantras*, their technical words and their importance. These *krithis* speak volume of the deep knowledge of Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar in the *Mantra shastra* and *Tantra shastra*. He has clearly presented the concept of worshipping the Devi in the form of *Chandika*, *Navakshari*, *Mahakaali*, *Maha Lakshmi* and *Maha Saraswathi*. Apart from the musical excellence, his knowledge in Sanskrit is depicted clearly in these kritis.



Kriti	Ist Line	Raga	Tala
Dhyana kriti	<i>Kamalambike aasritha kalpa lathike chandige</i>	Thodi	Rupaka
1st Avarna kriti	<i>Kamalamba samrakshathu maam</i>	Ananda Bhairavi	Tripura
2nd Avarna kriti	<i>Kamala amba bajare manasa</i>	Kalyani	Adi
3rd Avarna kriti	<i>Sri Kamala ambikaya</i>	Sankarabharanam	Rupaka
4th Avarna kriti	<i>Kamala ambikayai kanakamsukayai</i>	Kambhoji	Ata
5th Avarna kriti	<i>Sri Kamalambaya param nahire rechita kshityadi</i>	Bhairavi	Jhampa
6th Avarna kriti	<i>Kamalambikaaya sthava bhakthoham</i>	Punnagavali	Rupaka
7th Avarna kriti	<i>Sri Kamalambikaayam bakthin karomi</i>	Sahana	Tisra Tripura
8th Avarna kriti	<i>Sri Kamalambike vaava srive karadrita suka saarika</i>	Ghanta	Adi
9th Avarna kriti	<i>Sri Kamalamba jayati</i>	Ahiri	Rupaka
Mangala kriti	<i>Sri Kamalambike sive pahimama</i>	Sri	Khanda Eka

The Dikshitar's "*Navavarna Krithis*" including the *Dhyana Kirthanam* and *Mangala Kirthanam* vividly explain the different aspects of *Sri Chakram*, and the respective *Avarna Shakthis*. Those who learn these compositions properly and sing with great devotion will undoubtedly be blessed and will be granted all success by Sri Kamalamba. They and their family members will lead a prosperous and peaceful life and will enjoy the "total bliss".

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## Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar – Mahaa Bhakta Shiromani

By Vasundhara Srinivasan and Tirumalai Srinivasan Giridhar

“*Dhyanavu Kruthayugadalli, Yagavu Thretayugadalli*  
*Archane Dwaparadalli, Kirtana Matradi Kaliyudalli*  
*Mukutiyaniya Purandaravithala*”

Thus spoke the great composer Sri Purandaradaasa. “*Keertana Maatradi*” – just by singing songs in praise of Lord, in *Kaliyuga*, we reach *Mukti*. Sri Dikshitar has provided us with a very rich set of pearls and gems – in the form of songs – as the means for us to reach *Mukti*.

Let us, for a while, travel back to the days of yore – about 200 years back. Here comes an ardent student of music, suffering from severe ailment – approaching a *Purohit* to find him a relief for his ailment. “Planets *Guru* and *Shani* are disfavoured on you” was the finding of the *Purohit*.” But, *vedic* rituals for appeasing them cannot be performed for you – because you are a “*shudra*” was his polite denial. The patient approaches his *Guru* and seeks his refuge. The *Guru*, with devotion, composes songs of appeal – a *manthra saara* – on planets, teaches the *sahitya*, and, on singing them with devotion, for a week, the *shishya* gets fully relieved of his ailment. On realising the power of these songs, the *Guru* composes similar songs on other seven planets too, for the benefit of one and all. Thus came out the *Navagraha kritis*. The *Guru* and the composer were none other than Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar.

*Ajapaanata Vikshodhanmoda Dughdabdi Vichibhihi /*  
*Vardhaamahe Dikshitendra Kritibhihi Krutino Vayam //*

“May we – blessed by the compositions of Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar, which are the surging waves of milk (*Dughdaabdi*) of his ecstasy, emanated out of his incessant viewing of the ceaseless mystic dance of *Thyagesha* (*Ajapaanata*) or the *Aaatma* – may we prosper. *Ajapaa*, here, means “*Shiva* or *Thyagesha* of *Thiruvaarur* where Sri Dikshitar was born and grew” or “*Aaatma* within ourselves”. *Ajapaa* is an epithet of *Shiva*. *Ajapaa* means one who protects.

Treading the holy dust of Srinagara (*Thiruvarur*) since his birth, drenching in the ambrosia of the mellifluous *Hamsadhvani* founded by his father, experiencing the “*yogi viditaajapaa Natma*” of *Thyagesha* - his *krithis* are of ethereal significance – such is the greatness of Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar.

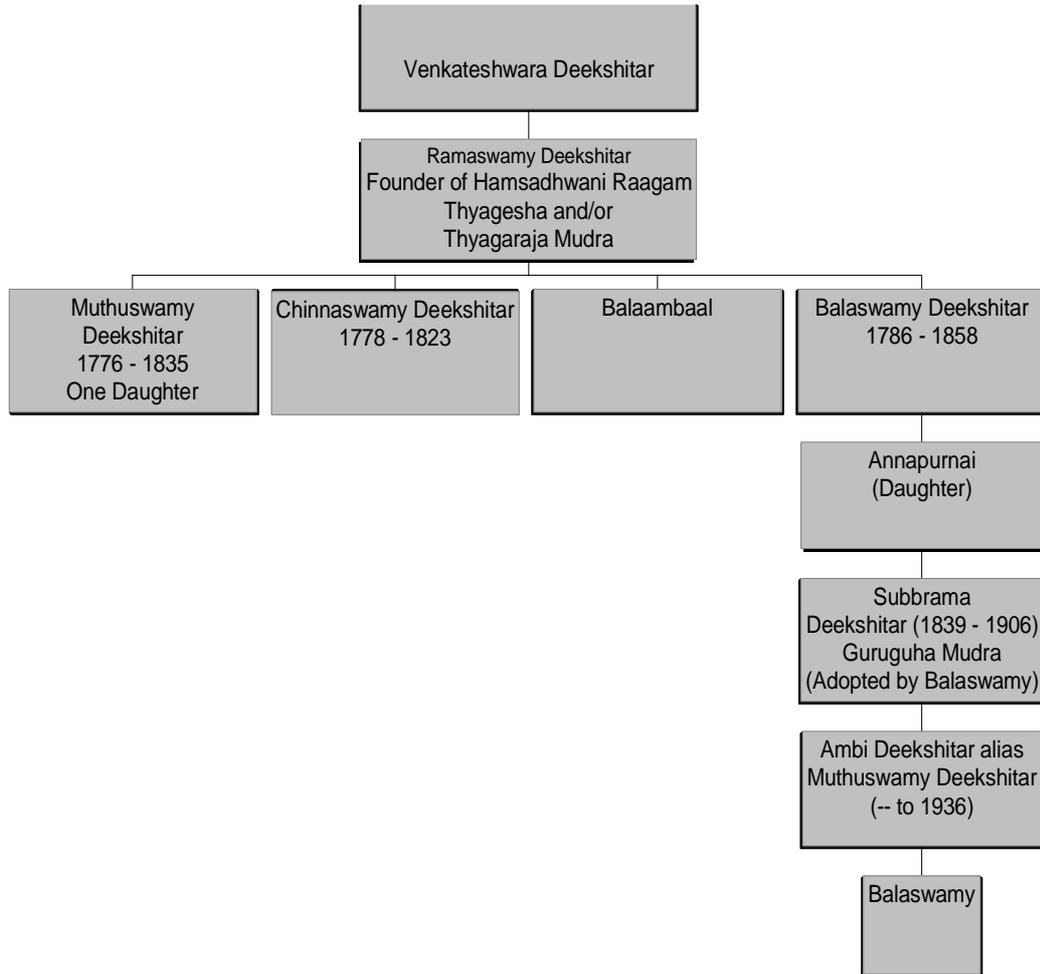
Sri Dikshitar is the youngest of the music trinity. Sri Dikshitar’s promulgation was, “music is anybody’s privilege”. According to *Gandharva Veda shastra*, any *Veda Saara* or essence of any part of *Veda*, can be recited by anyone, irrespective of caste or creed in the mode of “*Gaana Kriya*” or “music mode”. Does this not remind us of the great Saint Sri Ramanuja? Who called out to the public and recited the *Sri Narayana mantra*, so that everyone who heard it could attain *Moksha*.

Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar’s ancestors lived near Kanchipuram and were *Devi upaasakaas*. His father, Sri Ramaswamy Dikshitar, was well versed in *Veda shastra* and Sanskrit from his young age and was a very melodious and talented singer. Recognising his talent, knowledge and voice culture, Sri Ramaswamy Dikshitar was accepted as *shishya* by Veerabhadraiah of Venkatamukhi *paramparai*. Within 2 years, he was groomed to become a traditional and scientific *sangeeta vidwan*, proficient in *Sangeetha shastra*. He was then sent to Mayavaram to offer *sangeetha seva* to the deity, Mayuranatha Swamy. He learnt *veena* for 1 year and assimilated the *Lakshana Grantha* – “*Chaturdandi Prakaashika*”. He then was sent to Thiruvarur, when, as per the instructions in his dreams, by Sri Thyagaraja, the deity of Thiruvaarur – he framed the tradition of *Sangeetha* and *Natya Seva* at the temple *utsavam*. This is being followed even to this day at Thiruvarur. Sri Ramaswamy Dikshitar composed many exquisite *varna-s* in Telugu language, most suited for *Natya*. Some of them are *Chauka varnams* in *Thodi*, *Hindolavasanth*, *Swarasthaana varnam* in *Thodi* (*saahityam* is like the *swara* notation – as in “*Sarigaani daani garima gani*”), *swara saahitya varnam* in *Poorna Chandrika* (*chittai* and *ettugadai swarams* having *sahitya* like in *Naatakuranji varnam* – *Chalamela jese*) – with the *mudra* “*Thyagesha/Thyagaraaja Swami*”. It was he who unearthed the *raga Hamsadhvani*.

In 1776, Sri Ramaswamy Dikshitar was blessed with a son by the deity *Vaideeshwar* – and the child was named Muthuswamy Dikshitar. This was the enlightened period for classical music, the epoch of the music trinity. When Muthuswamy Dikshitar, the third and youngest of the Trinity, was born, Sri Thyagaraja was in his eighth year and Sri Shyama Sastri in his thirteenth year. Born to an erudite scholar, the blessed boy, by his sixteenth year was well versed in *vedadhyanam*, *kavya*, *drama vyakkarana*, *rhetoric*, *music*, *veena* etc. He was a staunch devotee of *Sri Thyagesha* and *Kamalaamba* of *Thiruvarur* and was always immersed in worship and meditation.

Sri Chidambaranatha Swamy, preceptor of Sri Ramaswamy Dikshitar, visited him and realising Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar’s inherent values, took him along with his two wives to Kashi, with the intention in bringing out the divine purpose he was born for. At Kashi, after worshipping *Sri Vishwanaatha*, *Annapurna*, *Kaalabhairava* on an auspicious day, Dikshitar was imparted with “*SriVidya Shoodashaakashari Mantra*” by the *Guru*. After five years of recitation of

## Family Tree of Muthuswamy Dikshitar



the *Mantra*, Sri Dikshitar was told by his preceptor that he had gained full favour of *Paradevathai* and that he now had to go to Thiruthani and worship *Lord Muruga*. To prove himself if he had attained that sublimity, he was asked by the Guru to stand on the banks of the Ganges and wishing his desires, lift Ganga water with both hands above his head. When Muthuswamy Dikshitar did accordingly, a veena fell in his hand – lo! There really was exclusive divine veena in his hand – with an upturned *vyali* - with “*Sri Rama*” written on the neck of the resonator.

As per his guru’s instruction, Sri Dikshitar then went to Thiruthani. There, *Lord Muruga* appeared in the form of an oldman and put sugar crystal in his mouth, blessed him and vanished. There bloomed forth the composing ability of Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar in the outburst of ecstasy of being blessed by “*Guruguha*” – he sang his first song:

“*Sri Nathadi Guruguho Jayathi ! Jayathi*” in *Prathama Vibhakti*. Then followed his second song in *withiya vibhakti*, “*Manasa Guruguha Roopam Bhajare*” in *Ananda Bhairavi*. In the *charanam* of the song came forth the scintillating rhyme: “*Nathva, Krithva, Jithwa, Mathwa*” .

Offering his compositions as unfading flowers at the feet of *Guruguha*, he stamped the song with the “*Guruguha*” *mudra*.

Then started the incessant flow of compositions of this *Mahabhakta Shiromani*, whose thoughts never strayed away from God and he continuously sang on the deities of all the places he visited, returning to *Thiruvapur* and worshipping *Lord Thyagaraja* through *Thyagaraja Palayeshumam*” in *Gowla* and the “*Thiruvapur Panchalinga*” *kritis*.

He composed different songs at different locations – such as “*Ekambaranatham*” at *Kanchi*, “*Neerajakshi Kamakshi*” at *Mayavaram*, “*Akshaya Linga Vibho*” at *Kivalur*, etc.

Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar’s ethereal life brought about some miracles also – not possible by an ordinary man. His *Navagraha kritis*, if sung at the specified days of the week, are said to bring about the needed relief to the devotional singer – even today. Another instance, on his way to *Ettiyapuram* from *Madurai*, he came upon a place under severe drought. Dikshitar, with deep devotion sang “*Anandamrutha Karshini*.” At the point, “*Salilum varshaya varshaya varshaye*” there came heavy downpour eradicating the drought and drenching the people with happiness. Many agnostics and atheists became theists.

Sri Dikshitar trained many ardent students into *vidwans*. Shuddha Maddalam Thambipaan, Thirukkadurai Bhaarati, Ponnai, Vadivelu, Shivaalingam, were a few of his students. Ponnai has composed many songs in Telugu with the *mudra* “*Guruguha Samiki Ne Dasudaithi*” as in “*maya thitha swarupini*” in *Mayamalavagowla*.

On his 59<sup>th</sup> birthday, in 1835, Dikshitar realised his end was nearing. He went to Madurai and sang his *Sharanaagathi* to the Goddess through his last song: “*Meenaakshi Me Mudum Dehi* in the *raga (Dasha) Gamakakriya*, pleading “*Paasha Mochani*” and “*Sundaresha priye*”.

Then he proceeded to Ettiyapuram. On *Narakachaturdashi* day, after ritualistic *Mangalasmaanam* and *Pooja* to *Ambaal*, he started singing and playing on veena, along with his *shishyaas*. In the end, all started singing his last song “*Meenakshi Me Mudum*”. At the point of rendering, “*Meenalochani Paasha Mochani*” he wanted his *shishyaas* to sing it three times. He then raised his hands in obeisance and uttered “*Shive paahi*” thrice. He did not ask for “*Moksha*” – he only pleaded for Her protection and that She would bestow on him what he deserved. His *aatma* in the form of *jyothi* came out and mingled with the holy feet of Goddess *Meenakshi*.

Sri Dikshitar’s songs – mostly in *Sanskrit*, are an impeccable and matchless *Mantra Shastra* pertaining to sacred *paraayana* hymnology. Each is akin to a research composition. The *Shaastras* are a store house of knowledge on all subjects – philosophy, science, medicine, etc. Sri Dikshitar compositions are referred to as “*Naari kela paaka*”. Many songs tell us the *raga*, the mode of worship that pleases the deity, the day of the deity’s festival, flower, fruit to be offered, etc. Each song has a *raga mudra*, *kshetra mudra*, *prabhanda mudra*, *naama mudra*. His variegated compositions also cover variegated topics of *sangeetha shaastra* like *lakshana gitas*; *taanavarnam* with *swara saahitya*; a number of English note compositions with *Sanskrit saahitya* as in “*shakti sahita ganapathim*” and “*shyamale meenakshi*”. He has composed *manipraavaala kirtanas* – songs with more than one language; *saahitya* blended together grammatically and with full meaning – as in : *Sri Venkataachalapathe* “ in *Kaapi ragam* and “*Sri Abhayaamba*” in *Sri ragam* with *Tamil* and *Telugu saahityam*. Also in his repertoire are *Samashti charanam kritis*, *chaturdasha*, and other *raagamalika kritis* as in “*Sri Vishwanaatham*” and “*Simhaasana Sthithe*”.

His songs are beautifully rhetoric, studded with *yatis*, rhymes as in “*Thyagaraaja yoga vaibhavam*” and “*Maanasa Guruguha*”. Some songs have *Chittai swarams* with *Jatis* as in “*Mahaganapathim – Gowla*”.

“*Mamava Pattabhi raama*” in *Manirang* gives a panoramic, picturesque and meticulous glory of the Lord. These songs were the spontaneous outflow of blessings from *Muruga*, the observance of *Ajapanatana* and the inheritance of noble “*Janana*” from the founder of the ineffable “*Hamsadhwani*” – his father, Sri Ramaswamy Dikshitar.

May we prosper under the banner of this great, great saint, *vaageyakaara* and the youngest and shortest lived of the music trinity.

Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar had two brothers, one sister and one daughter. The youngest brother of Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar – Balaswamy Dikshitar - adopted his grandson Sri Subbaraama Dikshitar who was very proficient and very knowledgeable in music. Sri Subbaraama Dikshitar was well versed in many languages and composed many *kritis* in Telugu, Tamil and *Sanskrit* languages with “*GuruguhaNutha*” or “*Guruguha kavi*” as a *mudra*. He translated the treatise “*Sangeetha saampradaaya pradarsini*” of Sri Venkatamukhi into Telugu which was being followed in “*Thyagaraaja Hridayam*” and other music *granthas*.

Sri Subbaraama Dikshitar lived between 1839 – 1906. His son, Ambi Bhagavathar – later known as Muthuswamy Dikshitar - walked into his father’s and his great grand uncle’s foot steps and composed many songs with the “*Guruguha*” *mudra*. Hence his compositions are sometimes confused with Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar compositions. Sri Ambi Dikshitar lived till 1936, and his son, Sri Balaswamy, was a great music *vidwan* too.

Some of *Sri Subbaraama Dikshitar* compositions are “*Sankaracharyam*” in *Sankarabharanam* (*Sanskrit*), “*Thripura sundari*” in *Naatakuranji* (*Telugu*), “*Parthasarathy ni sevinchani*” in *Yadukula kambhoji* (*Telugu*).

A few of the compositions of *Sri Ambi Dikshitar* include “*Kapali*” in *Mohanam*, “*Sri Meenakshi*” also in *Mohanam* and “*Sri Shalivateswaram*” in *Sankarabharanam*.

May we pray god that the Dikshitar lineage prosper and carry the torch of devotional, divine music to the whole world.

Music is divine and it has a miraculous impact on us. Is it not a miracle that when musicians play on an instrument or sing a song - produce near perfect frequencies through their vocal chords or through the tip of their fingers, some times through perfect breath control. It is an absolute miracle that the presentation of songs first starts in the brain – where the *tanmaya bhavum* starts - and is presented through either vocal chords or instruments. And all these happen in nano-seconds for each individual component of the songs.

*Sri Shubhamastu*

## **Our Sincere Thanks to ...**

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- *All the children who have participated in the colouring contest.*
- *Those who conveyed their inability to be present at the event.*
- *Sri Krishnamurthy, Sri Prasad, Sri Narendra and their families for helping us with the video recording of the event.*
- *A number of well wishers (including some from abroad) whose valuable suggestions were very touching.*
- *All of you who have attended and made this event a memorable one.*

*We hope we have acknowledged everyone who have helped us in this Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar Evening. If we have not acknowledged or if we have omitted anybody, it is purely accidental and for which we request you to pardon us.*

*Looking forward to your continued support in the future.*

***Krishne Tishtathi Sarvam Etad Akhilam/  
He Krishna Rakshasvamam//***

***Namaste***

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## List of Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar Kriti-s Rendered

Artist	Kriti	Raga	Deity
Anjali, Sharanya, Aditya, Gautham, Kishore, Bindumalini (Minni) Giridhar, Sharanya Napier-Raman, Nitya Niranjan, Navin Niranjan, Ramya, Priyanka, Anisha	Shakti Sahita Ganapathim	<i>Sankarabharanam</i>	Ganesha
Sri Pavalan Vikraman	Siddhi Vinayakam	<i>Shanmukhapriya</i>	Ganesha
Sri Jayaram Muthuswamy (veena)	Vathapi Ganapathim	<i>Hamsadhwani</i>	Ganesha
Smt Lakshmi Narendra (veena)	Mahaganapathim	<i>Nattai</i>	Ganesha
Smt Kalpana Ramu	Sri Nathadi Guruguho	<i>Mayamalavagowla</i>	Subramanya
Smt Lakshmi Raman	Divakara Tanujam	<i>Yadukula Kambhoji</i>	Sani
Sri M. S. Ramanathan	Thyagarajaya Namaste	<i>Begada</i>	Shiva
Sri Narayanan	Ananda Natana Prakasham	<i>Kedaram</i>	Shiva
Sri T. S. Giridhar (flute)	Akshaya Lingavibho	<i>Sankarabharanam</i>	Shiva
Smt Chitra Krishnamurthy	Ramanatham Bhajeham	<i>Pantuvarali</i>	Shiva
Smt Prema Ananthkrishnan	Thyagaraja Yoga Vaibhavam	<i>Ananda Bhairavi</i>	Shiva
Group rendition	Sri Vishwanatham	<i>Ragamalika</i>	Shiva
Smt Kalpana Raja	Neelakantam Bhajeham	<i>Kedaragowla</i>	Shiva
Smt Sangeetha Ayyar	Kailasanathena	<i>Kambhoji</i>	Shiva
Smt Uma Ayyar	Sri Mathrubhootam	<i>Kannada</i>	Shiva
Smt Shanthi Ramesh (veena)	Kanchadalayatakshi	<i>Kamalamanohari</i>	Parvathi
Smt Mythili Malli Iyer	Sri Kamalambikayam	<i>Sahana</i>	Parvathi
Smt Raji Ramachandran	Panchashatpitaroopini	<i>Devagandharam</i>	Parvathi
Smt Shubhasri Harinath	Kamalambam Bhajare	<i>Kalyani</i>	Parvathi
Smt Charumathi Sivaraman	Annapurne Vishalakshi	<i>Sama</i>	Parvathi
Smt Sukanya Haran	Mamava Meenakshi	<i>Varali</i>	Parvathi
Smt Poornima Nagaraj (veena)	Nirajakshi Kamakshi	<i>Hindolam</i>	Parvathi
Smt Ganga Kasinarayanan	Sri Satyanarayanam	<i>Subhapantuvarali</i>	Vishnu
Sri Mohan Ayyar (synthesizer)	Sri Lakshmi Varaham	<i>Abhogi</i>	Varaha
Smt Uma Sekhar	Mamava Pattabhirama	<i>Manirangu</i>	Rama
Smt Vasumathi Harish	Ramachandram Bhavayami	<i>Vasanta</i>	Rama
Smt Saroja Swaminathan	Sarasadala Nayana	<i>Khamas</i>	Krishna
Smt Saroja Balachandran	Santhanagopala Krishnam	<i>Khamas</i>	Krishna
Smt Bhavani Govindan	Sri Krishnam	<i>Thodi</i>	Krishna
Smt Aruna Parthibhan	Bala Gopala	<i>Bhairavi</i>	Krishna
Ms Meera Ramesh	Sri Parthasarathina	<i>Suddha Dhanyasi</i>	Krishna
Smt Jayanthi Rao	Varalakshmi Bhajare	<i>Sourashtra</i>	Lakshmi
Smt Usha Venkatachalam, Smt Subha Ramaswamy, Smt Jayanthi Narayanan, Smt Sashi Dhanikumar, Smt Girija Rajagopal	Hiranmayim Lakshmi	<i>Lalitha</i>	Lakshmi
Group rendition	Meenakshi Me Mudem	<i>Gamakakriya</i>	Parvathi