CHAPTER I

LIFE AND CONTRIBUTION OF MUTHUSWAMI DIKSHITAR
THE DIKSHITAR FAMILY TREE

KAŚYAPA GOTRA

VENKATESWARA AND BHAGIRATHI AMMAL

RAMASWAMI DIKSHITAR AND SUBBAMMAL

MUTHUSWAMI CHINNASAMI BALAMBAL BALUSAMI DIKSHITAR DIKSHITAR DIKSHITAR
(Had a daughter by his second wife)

RAMASWAMI IYER OF TIRUVARUR ANNAPURNA DEVI

VINAI CHINNASWAMI VENKATARAMA IYER

SUBBARAMA DIKSHITAR
(Adopted son of Balusami Dikshitar)

AMBI DIKSHITAR

TIRUVARUR BALUSAMI DIKSHITAR
LIFE AND CONTRIBUTION OF MUTHUSWAMI DIKSHITAR

“ A profound scholar, a poet and composer of the highest order, a master singer, a natural mystic — one cannot easily comprehend how these various rare elements came to be combined in one individual in one life”.1

The above words signify none other than the most complete classical composer and one of the most versatile men world has ever seen, Sri Muthuswami Dikshitar. The eighteenth century was blessed by the birth of the three immortals of carnatic music world, celebrated as the ‘MUSICAL TRINITY’, Tyagaraja, SyamaSastri and Muthuswami Dikshitar, in Tiruvarur. Among them Muthuswami Dikshitar was the youngest and the one with the shortest term of life.

BIRTH AND TUTELAGE

Muthuswami Dikshitar was born in the year 1775 in answer to the prayers offered by his parents, Ramaswami Dikshitar and Subbalakshmi, to the Lord Muthukumara Swami and Goddess Balambika of Vaitheeswarankoil. He was born to the star ‘Krithika’. Ramaswami Dikshitar was himself a musician and composer and is credited with the invention of the rāga ‘Hamsadhwani’ and the ‘Ashtotharāṣṭara Rāgamālika’ for which he received ‘Kanakābhishēkaṃ at Manali. Ramaswami was later blessed with two more sons, Balaswami and Chinnaswami and a daughter, Balambal.
Muthuswami Dikshitar had his initial lessons from his father. Before he was sixteen, he became proficient in Vēdānta, Mīmāṁsā, Jyōtisha, Tantra, Mantra, Kāvyā, Alankāra and in different languages like Sanskrit, Telugu etc. He was also an adept in playing the Vina.

Highly impressed by the musical calibre of Ramaswami Dikshitar, Mudukrishna Mudaliar, the Zamindar of Manali, appointed the former as the court musician. So the family had to shift to Manali. During the stay at Manali, Chidambaranatha Yogi from Varanasi, who initiated Ramaswami into Srividya cult, happened to hear Muthuswami Dikshitar sing and play the Vina. The Yogi requested Ramaswami to send the precious boy with him. With much hesitation, Ramaswami finally sent Muthuswami with the Yogi. Muthuswami Dikshitar stayed at Varanasi for about five years, practiced Srividya and obtained the ‘Ashtasiddhīs’. The Srividya name of the Yogi was ‘Srinatha’ and that of Muthuswami Dikshitar was ‘Chidanandanatha’. Both these names are mentioned in his first kriti, ‘Srīnāthādi Guruguho’.

At the end of the stay at Varanasi the Guru told him that it was time for their separation. The Yogi asked him to have a dip in the Ganges and see what he received. Dikshitar obeyed him and he was surprised to find a Vina with the Yālīmukha turned upwards and the word Srirama inscribed on it in Sanskrit. This special Vina was taken care by the grandson of Subbarama Dikshitar, Baluswami Dikshitar. The Guru then shook of his mortal coil in the Ganga and attained sāyūjya. The mortal remains of the saint were then interred at Hanuman Ghat. Muthuswami Dikshitar then left for the South with a broken heart.
THE FIRST COMPOSITION

From Varanasi, Muthuswami Dikshitar came to Tiruttani temple, the holy shrine attributed to Lord Subrahmanya. There, once when he was reciting the ‘Subrahmanya Panchadaṣaka Mantram’, Chengalvaraya came there as a great soul and put a piece of sugar candy into his mouth. The sugar candy was the representation of knowledge. When he opened his eyes, it is said that, he was alarmed to see Lord Subrahmanya moving away with His consorts Valli and Devasena. All of a sudden Muthuswami felt a new force swelling up from the innermost depths of his Being and all unconsciously, even as the sage Valmiki of yore, burst forth into a hymn of praise in the rāga Mayamalavagaula, opening as ‘Srīnāṭhādi Guruguha’. From then Muthuswami hailed Lord Subrahmanya as his Guru and adopted ‘Guruguha’ as his mudra in the compositions.

“A composer who has freely handled even all the vivādi rāgas, has chosen Mayamalavagaula, which is the first scale taught to beginners for various scientific reasons. Through his first kriti, Dikshitar has given the music students the clarity of stepping into graded speeds in quantum steps in the very first āvarta of his composition. Then he has proceeded to janṭaswara prayōgās and different alankāra patterns.”*²

**Pallavi**

\[\begin{align*}
\text{s} ; & ; \text{r} ; ; \text{g} ; ; \text{m} , | \text{p} , \text{d} , \text{n} , \text{ś} , | \text{n} \text{d} \text{p} \text{m} \text{g} \text{r} | \\
\text{Sri}…&\text{na..tha...di....gu rug u ho} \text{ jayatijayati}
\end{align*}\]

\[\begin{align*}
\text{s} , & ; \text{s} , \text{n} ; ; \text{n} ; \text{d} \text{d} , | \text{p} , \text{m} \text{p} \text{m} \text{g} , | \text{g} \text{r} , \text{r} \text{s} \text{s} \text{n} \text{n} \text{n} | \\
\text{Sri.chi..da..nandana} \text{ thohamitisantatamhridinibhaja}
\end{align*}\]
Many incidents in the life of Muthuswami Dikshitar, resemble those in the great Epic, 'Rāmāyana'. Srirama was born to King Dasaratha as a precious boy in answer to the prayers to Lord Vishṇu. Muthuswami was also a precious boy gifted by Lord Muthukumaraswami. Chidambaranatha Yogi takes the place of Sage Viśwamitra who requested Dasaratha to send Srirama with him to perform certain duties. The first outpour of music at Tiruttani also resembles that of Valmiki, the author of the Epic. Lord Subrahmanya had been the gliding force throughout the life of Muthuswami Dikshitar. He was born in the star of 'Kārthika’. His name, first composition and his mudra in compositions are related to Kārthikēyā.

CONTRIBUTION TO CARNATIC MUSIC

The contributions of Muthuswami Dikshitar to the carnatic music world, is noted for its quality, quantity and variety. His compositions count to more than 500 and they include Varṇams, Kritis, Rāgamālikās and Groupkritis.

Muthuswami Dikshitar's life was a long pilgrimage. At every shrine he made his offerings of songs describing local customs and traditions focusing attention on the special attribute of the Lord that finds expression in the local deity. He was impartial to Vaiṣṇavaite and Śaivaite temples.

Muthuswami Dikshitar is credited with the maximum number of group kritis which comes to about 15. Even though these compositions are considered as a group, each kriti has its own individuality and charm. They can be presented as individual kritis. When the number of kritis in
a group exceed eight, he has used the Vibhakti style. The most common of his Group kritis are

1. Tiruttani kritis or Guruguha Kritis
2. Navāvaraṇa kritis
3. Panchalingasthala kritis
4. Tiruvarur Panchalinga kritis
5. Navagraha kritis
6. Shōdaśa Gaṇapati kritis
7. Tyāgarāja Vibhakti kritis

**Tiruttani Kritis or Guruguha Kritis**

Muthuswami Dikshitar composed his first kriti at Tiruttani. The kriti was in the first vibhakti and he composed seven more kritis in the next seven vibhaktis. Since all the kritis started with ‘Guruguha’, this set is also called ‘Guruguha Kritis’. The high flown vēdāntic thoughts are brought about in these kritis. The kritis are

1. Srīnāthādi Guruguha - Mayamalavagula - Ādi
2. Mānasaguruguha - Anandabhairavi - Rūpakam
3. Srīguruṇa - Padi - Rūpakam
4. Guruguḥāya - Sama - Ādi
5. Guruguḥadanyam - Balahamsa - Jhampa
6. Srīguruguhasya - Purvi - Chāppu
7. Guruguhaswāmini - Bhanumati - Triputa
8. Srīguruguhamürte - Udayaravichandrika - Rūpakam
In the kriti ‘Srīguruguhasya’ in Purvi rāga he has sung ‘Guruguhasya dāsoham nochēt Chidguruguhēvāham’. It means that ‘I am the dāsa of Guruguha or I am Guruguha himself’. In the words ‘Guruguhasya dāsoham’ he tries to bring out the sēvya-sēvaka bhāva between the devotee and the Lord and the philosophy of ‘Aham Brahmasmi’ is brought out in the words ‘Nochēt Chidguruguha ēvāham’. No other composer of his time has been found using this kind of vibhakti style in composing.

Navāvaraṇa Kritīs

‘Āvaraṇa’ literally means that which is concealed. The nine āvaranās in one’s body conceal the Brahma Jīvan. Tantra Śāstra describes elaborate rituals for Devi worship. Inorder to reach Her, one must pass through nine āvaranās and perform certain rituals at each stage which have different names and powers. These nine stages are called the ‘Navāvaraṇās’. The Srīchakra is a yantra that has supernatural powers. The spiritual ascent of the yogi is from the outer cover inwards, the highest state being at the centre. The centre or the bindu represents the point of concentration of all creative forces. ‘Āvaraṇa Dēvatās’ represent the different states of our mind while practising Śrīvidya. The nine āvaranās, the dēvatās represented and the different stages of mind are shown in the next page.
Kamalāmba Navāvaraṇam

Muthuswami Dikshitar was a Dēvi upāsaka and was an expert in Tantra Śāstra, Mantra Śāstra and Yantra Śāstra. He has composed a number of Navāvaraṇa Kritīs among which the most popular is the Kamalāmba Navāvaraṇa kritīs, which is a set of 11 kritīs. Nine kritīs on the different āvaraṇās are preceded by a dhyāna kriti and ended with a
mangalam. The eleven kritis included in the Kamalamba Navāvaraṇam are,

1. Kamalāmbikē - Todi - Rūpakam
2. KamalāmbāSamrakshatu - Anandabhairavi - Tripuṭa
3. Kamalāmbām Bhajarē - Kalyani - Ādi
4. Sṛīkamalāmbikayā - Sankarabharanam - Rūpakam
5. Kamalāmbikāyai - Kamboji - Khaṇḍa Āta
6. Sṛīkamalāmbāyāh - Bhairavi - Jhampa
7. Kamalāmbikāyāstava - Punnagavarali - Rūpakam
8. Sṛīkamalāmbikāyām - Sahana - Tripuṭa
9. Sṛīkamalāmbike/vāva - Ghanta - Ādi
10. Sṛīkamalāmbā Jayati - Ahiri - Rūpakam
11. Sṛīkamalāmbikē - Sri - Khaṇḍa Īka

Abhayāmba Navāvaraṇam

During his pilgrimage, Muthuswami Dikshitar came to Mayavaram. There was an ancient temple there, where Lord Śiva was known as Mayuranatha Swami and the Goddess as Devi Abhayamba. In praise of the Goddess he composed a set of nine kritis in eight vibhaktis which came to be known as ‘Abhayāmbā Navāvaraṇa kritis’. In the Kedara rāga kriti, Dikshitar has described the steps to charge the Kundalini Sakti. The kritis that come in this group are,

1. Abhayāmbā Jagadamba - Kalyani - Ādi
2. Aaryam Abhayāmbām - Bhairavi - Tripuṭa
3. Girijāya Ajayā - Sankarabharanam - Ādi
4. Abhayāmbikāyai - Yadukulakamboji - Rūpakam
5. Abhayāmbikāyāh - Kedāragaula - Jhampa
Nilōtpalāmbā Vibhakti kritis

Nilōtpalāmbā is the consort of Lord Tyagaraja of Tiruvarur. She is the bhōgini while Kamalāmba is the yōgini. Mūthuswami Dikshitar has composed a set of eight kritīs on Nilōtpalāmba in the eight vibhaktīs. In the Ritigaula rāga kriti, Dikshitar has mentioned Devī as the one who resides in the heart of Tyagaraja as, ‘Tyāgarāja Antarangam’.

In the Kannadagaula kriti, Dikshitar says that he is protected by Nilōtpalāmba. She is capable of granting ‘Nirvāṇa’ or ‘mōksha’.

‘Nilōtpalāmbikāya nirvāṇasukhapradāya rakṣīthōham’

A peculiar form of dance ‘Hallishalāsyā’ finds mention in this kriti. Dikshitar has also given the rāga name and sthala name through the phrase ‘Kāsi Kannadagaulādi dēsa’.

The Chayagaula rāga kriti has the āvaraṇa chakra name woven into the sāhitya as ‘Trailōkyachakravāsini’. The Devī wears blue clothes, ‘Nīlāmbara’ and she is adorned by blue flowers. ‘Nīlapushpa mālavrita’

All the kritīs are composed in rāgās which have names ending in Gaula and thus these kritīs are often called ‘Gaula kritīs’. The kritīs included in this group are.

6. Ambikāyā: Abhayāmbikāyā: - Kedaram - Ādi
7. Abhayāmbāyām - Sahana - Tripūta
8. Dākshayāṇī - Todi - Rūpakam
9. Śrī Abhayāmbā - Śrī - Ādi
1. Niltpalambajayati - Narayanagaula - Chāpu
2. Niltpalambambhajare - Nariritigaula - Chāpu
3. Niltpalambikaya - Kannadagaula - Ādi
4. Niltpalambikayai - Kedaragaula - Ādi
5. Niltpalambikayah param - Gaula - Rūpakam
7. Niltpalambikayam - Purvagaula - Rūpakam
8. Niltpalambikē - Chayagaula - Rūpakam

Since all these kritis begin on the term ‘Niltpalamba’ Dikshitar has cleverly commenced all these kritis in the swara ‘Ni’ which naturally gives a literary beauty.

Navagraha Kritis or Vāra Kritis

Navagraha Kritis are a set of nine kritis in praise of the nine planets. It is said that Dikshitar has composed only the first seven kritis for each day of a week and the last two, for Rāhu and Kētu, was composed by later composers. The kriti ‘Brihaspatē’ in Atana rāga was composed first to cure the illness of one of his disciples, Suddhamaddalam Tambiyappa. Later he was inspired to compose on all the other planets.

According to astrology, it is the position of the planets in one’s horoscope that indicates the various incidents in his life. “If man is conceived to be the Universe in miniature, the Sun would represent the Ātma. the Moon –mind, Mars - alankāra, Mercury – intelligence, Jupiter
buddhi, Venus – worldly pleasures and Saturn his vivēka". The position of these planets can be changed through sincere worship.

Each song of this group is composed in each of the Sūlādi sapta tālās. All the rāgās used are sampūrṇa rāgās of the Asampūrṇa mela paddhati followed by Dikshitar. The selection of rāgās for each of these kritis remains as a noteworthy feature. Lyrical beauty and musical structure of these kritis are also noteworthy. The kritis are

1. Sūryamūrtte - Sourashtra - Dhruva Tālam
2. Chandram Bhaja - Asaveri - Maṭya Tālam
3. Angārakam - Suruti - Rūpakam
4. Budham Āṣrayāmi - Natakurinji - Jhampa Tālam
5. Brihaspatē - Atana - Tripuṭa Tālam
6. Sriṣukrabhagavantam - Paras - Aṭa Tālam
7. Divākaratanujam - Yadukulakamboji - Ōka Tālam
8. Smarāmyaham - Ramapriya - Rūpakam
9. Mahāsuraṃ Kētu - Chamaram - Rūpakam

Shōdaśa Gaṇapati Kritis

Muthuswami Dikshitar is credited with a maximum of 25 kritis on Lord Gaṇesa. Lord Gaṇesa is worshipped in different names and forms. The ‘Skanda Purāṇa’ mentions 56 forms while the Mantra Śastra mentions 16 forms or Shōdaśa Gaṇapatis. Muthuswami Dikshitar has composed Kritis on these sixteen forms. Concerning these Kritis also there is controversy. Some references say that the kriti Rakta Gaṇapatim in Mohana rāga belongs to this group while some say it does not, because
it has reference to ‘Paraśurāma’ and ‘Pāyasam’ which are terms related to Kerala. Dikshitar has not included the name of the forms in the kritis. Most of these kritis give iconographical details. Eight of these kritis take terms related to Tiruvarur and these kritis may be regarded as those in praise of the forms enshrined in Tiruvarur. The kritis related to Tiruvarur are,

1. UchishtaGaṇapati - Kasiramakriya (Sripura sadanē)
2. Panchamātanga - Malahari (Kamalāpuravihārena)
3. MahāGaṇapate - Natanarayani (Vallabha Gaṇapati)
4. Vallabhanāyakasya - Begada (Vallabha Gaṇapati)
5. Vātapi Gaṇapati - Hamsadhwni (Mulādhārakshētrasthitam)
6. SrīmahāGaṇapati - Gaula (Kamalālayatatanivāso)
7. Srīmūlādēhāra - Sri (Mulādhārachakra)
8. Hastivadanāya - Navroj (Hāṭakamayamandapē)

The other kritis which belong to this group are,

10. MahāGaṇapatim - Todi
11. Vināyakam - Chakravakom
12. Hē Ramba - Atana
13. Siddhivināyakam - Chamaram
14. Gaṇanāyakam - Rudrapriya

“Among the above kritis, the 11th and 12th are found only in manuscripts of some disciples.” In some kritis Gaṇēṣa is given the epithets used for His father, Lord Śiva. He is referred to as ‘Phālachandra’ in the Gaula kriti ‘SrīmahāGaṇapati’. ‘Nikhilachandrakhaṇḍa’ in the kriti ‘Vātapi
Gaṇapatim’ in Hamsadhwani and ‘Ravi Śaśi Vahni nētram’ in the kriti ‘Vināyakam’ in Chakravakom rāga.

The Panchalingasthala kritīs, Tiruvarur Panchalinga kritīs and Tyagaraja vibhakti kritīs are dealt with in the last chapter. All the kritīs in these three groups are in praise of Lord Śiva.

Rāgamālikā Kritīs

Among the Trinities, only Muthuswami Dikshitar has found to have attempted Rāgamālikā kritīs. He has composed four excellent Rāgamālikās. The pieces are made impressive by definite plans and paternal variety. The selection of rāgās for each part is noteworthy.

The Rāgamālika ‘Simhāsanasthite’ is a garland of four mangala rāgās, Sourashtra, Vasanta, Suruti and Madhyamavati and is thus called ‘Mangala Rāgamālikā’. Each passage has a simple chittaswara in the rāga concerned. The Rāgamālika ‘Pūrnachandranibhadhade’ is usually known as the ‘Shadragamālikā’ as it consists of six rāgās and is in praise of Goddess Lalita. The rāgās included are Purnachandrika, Narayani, Saraswatimanohari, Śuddhavasanta, Hamsadhwani and Nagadhwni. All these rāgās are janyās of the 29th mēlakarharāga, Dhirasankarabharanam. As in the case of the Mangala Rāgamālika, this Rāgamālika also has no common makutam in the chittaswaram. “In the notebook of one of the students of Vina Vidwan Ananta Krishna Iyer, two more passages in rāgās Kedara and Bilahari were placed as the 5th and 6th passage of this composition.”

*5
The Daśāvathāra Rāgamālika ‘Mādhavo mām pāhi’ is also ascribed to Muthuswami Dikshitar. The first six passages are composed in the Ghana rāgas, Nata, Gaula, Varali, Arabhi and Sri. The last four are in Vasanta, Saurashtra, Suruti and Madhyamavati. Each has mention of the incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. There is no common makuṭam.’

The Chaturdaśa Rāgamālika, ‘Sri Viṣwanātham’ is a string of 14 rāgas. The composition is in praise of Lord Viṣwanatha. The anecdote behind this kriti is mentioned in the coming chapter. The pallavi comprises of two rāgas, Sri and Arabhi. The Anupallavi takes four rāgas namely Gauri, Nata, Gaula and Mohana. The charaṇa is composed in eight rāgas, Sama, Lalita, Bhairavam, Saranga, Sankarabharanam, Kamboji, Devakriya and Bhupala. At the end of the composition there is a combination of all the 14 rāgas in the reverse order from Bhupala to Sri rāga. The way Muthuswami Dikshitar has incorporated the rāga mudra into the sāhitya is simply amazing.

Muthuswami Dikshitar is also said to have composed Tāna Varnams, Pada Varnams or Chauka Varṇams and also a special kind of composition called ‘svarasthāna varṇam’. Tānavarnams are, *6

1. Gajānanāya - Sankarabharanam - Āṭa Tālam
2. Chaturdaśa bhuvana - Rāgamalika - Ādi Tālam

The Chouka Varṇam ‘Rūpamu jūchi’ in Todi rāga is a fine piece. According to some, this is composed by his father, Ramaswami Dikshitar. The absence of the mudra, ‘Guruguha’ is also a reason to suspect the authorship. Many Varṇams of Dikshitar are said to be
preserved by the members of the families of the Nāgaswaram players attached to Tiruvarur temple.

Muthuswami Dikshitar has also composed a Daru in Sriranjini rāga which is also suspected by some as the composition of his father. The composition commences as ‘NīSāti’ in Telugu. The swarasthāna Varṇam composed by Dikshitar is in the rāga, Todi. The charana of this composition has the term ‘ Manāli Venkata Krishnēndra’ which may be in praise of the Lord as worshipped by his family patron.

Deities Praised

Among the Musical Trinities, Muthuswami Dikshitar is the only composer to have composed one kriti each on Lord Ayyappa of Sabarimala and Guruvayurappa. He has composed about 170 kritis on Goddess Parvati, 125 on Lord Siva, 55 on Lord Krishna, 36 on Lord Subrahmanya, 26 on Lord Ganēsa, 21 on Lord Rama, 12 on Goddess Saraswati, 9 each on Goddess Lakshmi and the Navagrahās and 5 on Lord Anjaneya. He is also credited with the honour of being the only vāggeyakāra of his time, who has composed vibhakti kritis.

Rāgās used

It is a well known fact that it was Ramaswami Dikshitar who systematised the rituals of the Nāgaswaram music in the Tyagarājaswāmi Dēvasthānam. Nāgaswaram music is famous for its rich imagination and improvisation of rāga and display of rhythm. Muthuswami Dikshitar was indeed fortunate to listen to the unique treatment of rāgalāpāna in his
## Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SYBL</th>
<th>KRITIS</th>
<th>NOS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>DEVI KRITIS</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>SIVA KRITIS</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>GURUGUHA KRITIS</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>KRISHNAKRITIS</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>GANESA KRITIS</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>RAMA KRITIS</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>ANJANEYA KRITIS</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>BRAHMA KRITIS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>NAVAGRAHA KRITIS</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>SASTHA KRITIS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total** 473 NOS

### Deitis Praised

- Devi
- Siva
- Gurusuha
- Krishna
- Ganesa
- Rama
- Anjaneya
- Brahma
- Navagraha
- Sastha
childhood and it is reflected in his handling of the rāgās in kritis. Each kriti in a rāga is the cream and essence of the rāga.

There are two schools of mēḷakartha systems, one propounded by Venkatamakhi and the other by Govindacharya. The nomenclature adopted by the first is called the ‘Kanakambari-Phenadyuti’ nomenclature and that by the second is called the ‘Kanakangi- Ratnangi’ nomenclature. Muthuswami Dikshitar has followed the first system while Tyagaraja has followed the second. Among the janya rāgās also the names sometimes differ. To mention a few, Dikshitar has used the names Kasiramakriya, Vegavahini and Sivapantuvarali for the rāgās Pantuvarali, Chakravakom and Subhapantuvarali respectively. He has used the name Udayaravichandrika for the present Suddhadhanyasi.

Muthuswami Dikshitar was the first to compose a kriti in the rāga Mayamalavagaula rāga which is the basic rāga in carnatic music. He has handled a large number of rāgās like Todi, Bhairavi, Kalyani, Sankarabharanam, Kamboji and so on, bringing out their complete essence and beauty. Dikshitar Kritis in āpūrva rāgās like Mangalakaisiki, Ghanta, Gopikavasantham, Narayanagaula and so on give a complete picture of these rāgās. There are rāgās in which only this great composer has composed. Muthuswami Dikshitar has composed in 70 mēḷakartha rāgās .He has not composed in two mēḷakartha rāgās which are Dhunibhinnashadjam and Gamanasrama. The richness of rāgabhava is the most outstanding feature of Dikshitar kritis. The Trinities are ascribed to bhāva (Tyagaraja), rāga (Muthuswami Dikshitar) and tāla (SyamaSastri). “The rāga Amritavarshini is believed to be an invention of Muthuswami Dikshitar.”*7
Most of the kritis composed by Muthuswami Dikshitar at Tanjore in praise of different deities are in the vivadi rāgas like Ganasamavarali, Nabhomani, Nagabharanam, Phenadyuti, Bhogachayanata and Bhanumati. It is said that this was done mainly for the purpose of acquainting his eminent disciples, the famous ‘Tanjore Quartette’, with the scheme of the 72 mēḷās of Venkitamakhi.

Tālās used

The tāla concept is a distinct feature of Indian music. Dikshitar was a master of tālās. He is the only composer regarded to have composed in all the seven basic tālās of carnatic music. He has chosen the Vilambita laya or slow tempo for most of his kritis. Thus he was successful in incorporating embroidery patterns in the musical texture. The madhyamakāla sāhitya that comes at the end of the different angās prove that he is comfortable in the speed tempo also. Many of the songs in Misra chāpu tāla and Khanda chāpu tāla was early mentioned as Misra ēkam and Khanda ēkam with the same aksharakālās of 7 and 5 respectively. He has to his credit some kritis in Aṭa tāla. They are,

1. Kāsi Viswēswarāya - Kamboji
2. Kamalāmbikāyai - Kamboji
3. SṛīSukrabhagavantam - Paras
4. Sṛī Valmīkalingam - Kamboji

Sangatīs

Sangatīs are improvisation in the dhātu of the same line of a kriti.
As far as Muthuswami Dikshitar was concerned, his knowledge in rāga and the vilambakāla sāhitya has helped him to introduce excellent sangatis in his kritis easily. Some of his kritis like ‘Vātapi Ganapatim’ in Hamsadhwani rāga and ‘Subramanyāya Namaste’ in Kamboji rāga have sangatīs which count upto 10 for the pallavi. These kritis stand as dictionaries of the particular rāgas. He has also composed very simple kritis like ‘Pārvatīpatim’ in Hamsadhwni rāga.

**Language selected**

“It looks as though the Trinities have paid their tribute to the spirit of Sanskrit literature by way of their offering of the first composition in this commanding language”. The first composition of Tyagaraja is ‘NamōNamō Rāghavāya’ in Desya Todi set to Tiṣra Ėka. The first composition of Muthuswami Dikshitar was ‘Śrīnāthādi Guruguha’ set to Ādi Tāla and that of SyamaSastri was ‘Janani Natajanaparipālini’ in Saveri rāga set to Adi Tāla.

Muthuswami Dikshitar has mainly used the Dēva- Vēda bhāsha, Sanskrit, as the medium of his compositions. There are very few in Telugu and Manipravāla. The reasons for his choice according to leading musicologists are,

1. “In his kritis it is not emotion but aesthetic excellence of the rāga sanchārās that plays a dominant role. In his kritis, sāhitya has a value not so much for its sense as for its tonal quality. For richness of sound, Sanskrit is unmatched and that is why Dikshitar has preferred it.”
2. “His compositions are permeated with bhakti rasa alone, as the theme of these compositions is only the praise of God. So as his compositions are bhakti rasa pradhāna prabandhās, this Dēvabhāsha naturally suits more than any other language”.

3. “Dikshitar compositions reflect the sayings in Vēda, Upanishad, Rāmāyana, Bhāgavata, Lalitāsahasranāma, Mooka panchasati, Soundaryalahari, Ambanavamimalai, Syamalādandakam, Vishnusahasranāmam Nāmāvalīs and stōtrās of Vinayaka, Subrahmanya, Naṭaraja, Tyagaraja and other deities and planets. Thus his compositions are like ‘Dhyāna slokas’ hence he must have resorted to Sanskrit”.

Muthuswami Dikshitar has also composed in Telugu and Manipravālam. The composition in Sriranjini rāga, ‘Nīsāti’ is in Telugu. Some of his kritis are a mix of Sanskrit, Tamil and Telugu and such kritis are called ‘Manipurāla kritis’. For example, the kriti ‘Venkatāchalapathe’ in Karnataka Kapi, set to Ādi tāla. The pallavi itself is a mixture of the three languages.

‘Venkatāchalapathe ninnu nammiti vēgame
Nanu rakshiyumayya’
Venkatāchalapathe - Sanskrit
Ninu nammiti vēgame nanu - Telugu
Rakshiyumayya - Tamil

The anupallavi and charaṇam are composed in the same manner.
Structural Beauties

Dikshitar kritis have a style of their own. Compositions of most of the composers have pallavi, anupallavi and one or more charanams whose latter part is sung to the same dhātu as that of the anupallavi. But majority of Dikshitar kritis have charanam with an entirely different dhatu showing his immense knowledge in different rāgas.

Muthuswami Dikshitar is said to be the first composer to have introduced the anga called ‘Samashti charanam’ which stands in the place of the anupallavi and charanam. Some examples are,
1. ‘Sri Saraswati Namōstute’ - Arabhi - Rūpaka Tālam
2. ‘Sri Pārthasārathina’ - Udayaravichandrika - Rūpaka Tālam

The use of a piece of sāhityam in madhyamakāla at the end of angās is his master piece. The madhyamakāla may occur sometimes in the pallavi (Sṛī Saraswat - Arabhi) sometimes in the anupallavi (Sṛī Varalakshmi - Sri rāgam) and mostly at the end of the charanam. (Dharmasamvardhini - Madhyamavati). Madhyamakāla sāhitya is sometimes found in one or more angās ( Guruguhāya - Sama ).

Muthuswami Dikshitar has also included beautiful chiṭṭaswaras in his kritis. The kritis ‘Ṣivakāmipatim’ in Natakurinji rāga and ‘Ṭyāgarājāya namaste’ in Begada are examples. Some kritis like ‘Sri Mahāganapatim’ in Gaula rāga and ‘Ānanda Naṭanaprakāśam’ in Kedara rāga comprise of beautiful rhythmic passages called ‘solkattu swaras’ which employ tāla mnemonics. It takes partly swaras and partly tāla syllables like ‘thaka’, ‘thakita’, ‘jhanakajham’ and so on. This decorative
anga is widely used in kritis composed in praise of dancing deities like Ganeśa and Naṭaraja.

**Literary Excellence**

Through his kritis Muthuswami Dikshitar has not only proved his knowledge in music, but also, in literature. The use of the Vibhakti style in his kriti itself, provide ample proof of his literary knowledge. His kritis replete with ‘Ṣabdālankārās’ such as prāsa and yati. Almost all his kritis are examples showing prāsa of different types. (Muhana, Dvīṭīyākshara, Antya and Anuprāsa). The charanam of the Navāvarana kriti, ‘Kamalāmbikāyaisthava’ in Punnagavarali rāga is an excellent example of Muhana and Dvīṭīyākshara prāsa.

‘Daṣakalātmaka…………………
Daṣārasarva…………………..
Daṣādinuta…………………..
Daṣāsaktīsamēta………………
Daṣavimsadvarna……………..
Daṣamudra……………………
Daṣarathādinuta………………
Daṣakarana……………………

The kriti ‘Srīkrishnam Bhajamānasam’ is an ideal example of Antya prāsa. The kriti is in Todi rāga. The ending words are,

Pallavi……………………… Satatam
………………………………… bālam
Anupallavi…………………… charanam
………………………………… bhavataranam
Charanam…………………… vanamālam
The Anupallavi of the kriti 'Akshayalingavibhō' in Sankarabharanam rāga can be taken as a good example of Anuprāsa.

'Dakshasikshana Dakshatarāsura
Lakshanavidhi Vilakshanalakshya
Lakshanabahu Vichakshanasudha
Bhakshanaguru Katakshaveekshana’

Muthuswami Dikshitar has composed kritis with excellent yati patterns of the gōpuccha and srōtovaha type. The kriti ‘Tyāgarāja yōga vaibhavam’ in Anandabhairavi rāga is the best example. The pallavi takes the Gōpuccha yati as

Tyāgarāja yōga vaibhavam
Agarāja yōga vaibhavam
Rāja yōga vaibhavam
Yōga vaibhavam
Vaibhavam
bhavam
vam

The charanam takes the srōtovaha yati
Gōpuccha yati is also found in the Sri rāga kriti ‘Sṛī Varalakshmi’ and the Sudha Tarangini rāga kriti ‘Māye tvam’as

Sri sārasapate
Rasapate
Sapate
Pate and

Sarasakaye
Rasakaye
Sakaye
Kaye respectively.

Muthuswami Dikshitar has used the ‘yamakam’, i.e., the use of the same word in different meanings and combinations. In the Navāvarana Kriti, ‘Kamalāmbike’ in Todi rāga, he has used the word ‘Kamala’ in different meanings through different combinations like, Kamalāsana (Brahma), Kamalālayam (Tirtham), Kamalāmbika (Goddess) and so on.

The weaving of rāgamudrās into the sāhitya without causing disturbance to the rest of the sāhitya, shows his extra ordinary literary brilliance. Some examples are,
In some kritis he has used the process called 'Antarukti'. For the purpose of implementing prasa, certain sahitya portion will be split in such a manner that a portion of the word will be passed on to the next avarta without disturbance to the meaning. For example in the Punnagavarali rāga kriti,

Pallavi - Ėhi Annapūrṇe Sanni-
         dēhi Sadāpurṇē Suvarṇē.

Some of the kritis of great vāggēyakārās are sung in different rāgās by later musicians. But Muthuswami Dikshitar kritis cannot be sung like that because he has cleverly included the rāga mudras in almost all his kritis. Rāgamudras are not seen in few kritis eg. Saranga rāga kriti 'Tyāgarāja krtyākrtya'

Many of his kritis serve as dictionary of words. Eg. Nāgaswaram, rāga names like Sama etc. Some facts in music are also included in his kritis.

Eg. ‘Daṣagamaka kriyē’( Meenākshi mē mudam’ in Purvikalyani rāga)

**Muthuswami Dikshitar and Western Music**

The zamindar of Manali who invited the family of Muthuswami Dikshitar to his place, had close relationship with the East India Company
and used to take Muthuswami Dikshitar along with him to Fort St. George and thus Dikshitar had the golden opportunity to listen to Western music played by the British band. It was also at Manali that his brother, Balaswami learnt the western violin.

A collector, one Mr. Brown, was so much impressed by the Sanskrit lyrics of the compositions of Dikshitar that he requested him to combine English songs and Western music with Sanskrit garb. Dikshitar on the spot thought of the tunes played by the band in Fort St. George and gave them the Sanskrit sahitya in praise of Hindu Gods. Thus the song ‘God save the King’ turned out as ‘Santatam pāhi mām Sangīta Śyāmale’. He later composed more than 50 such songs called ‘Nottuswara sāhitya’ of which most of them are in the rāga Sankarabharanam, the major scale of Western music.

**Influence of Hindusthani Music**

Ramaswami Dikshatar’s guru, Vina Venkata Vaidyanatha Dikshitar was a descendant of Govinda Dikshitar and Venkitamakhi. Venkitamakhi was himself an adept in Hindusthani music and had a number of disciples belonging to that school. This can be the reason why Muthuswami Dikshitar had an affinity towards Hindusthani music. Moreover his stay at Varanasi for a long period of five years enabled him to listen to Hindusthani music from its foremost exponents. His knowledge in Hindusthani music is reflected in many of his kritis.

Karnatic music has adopted many rāgās from the North. Many compositions of Muthuswami Dikshitar remain as master piece in such rāgās. Suitable examples are ‘Jambūpathe’ in Yamunakalyani ‘Parimaṇa
Ranganātham’ in Hamirkalyani, ‘Rangapuravīhāra’ in Brindavana Saranga and ‘Akhilāndēśwari’ in Dwijavanti rāga. The influence of Hindusthani music can be seen not only in the selection of rāgās, but also in the use of gamakās. The gamaka ‘jāru’, though common for the systems, is more common in Hindusthani music and Dikshitar has made good use of them.

Jāru means a glide. Ėtra jāru is the phrase in ascend and Erakka jāru in the descent. These glides may take place between two notes. Where there are a number of intermediate, the gliding takes place without the intermediate notes sounded. Let us take the Dwijavanti kriti ‘Akhilāndēśwari’ as example.

The pallavi itself starts in an Ėtra jāru as,

\[ \| r, p, m, g, m g, m g r, r, m g r, s, | \ldots | \]

A.....khi....lān...............dē..............swa....ri
\[ \| s, s, s, s, s, s, s, s, s, s, s, n, | \ldots | \]

Ă............ga....ma....sam.....pra...dā....

Anupallavi - \[ \| s, n, d, n, p, r, r, r, r, \]

Ni...........ma........le........

Charanām - \[ p, s, s, s, s, s, n, s, s, s, s, s, n, d, p, p, p, r \]

Vak........dē..... va.....tā........rā... | ......dhi...te...

//s, p, p, r, r, r, r,

Ja....lli.....ma...ddala
The rāga Yamunakalyani corresponds to the Emam or Sudhakalyan of Hindusthani and Dikshitar has composed the kritīs ‘Nandagopāla’ and ‘Jambūpate’ in this rāga. Hamirkalyani in which Dikshitar has composed the kriti ‘Puraharanandana’ corresponds to the rāga Kedara of Hindusthani.

Siva Pantuvarali which is the 45th mela of the Venkatamakhī scheme, now called Subha Pantuvarali has been used by Dikshitar to compose the kritīs ‘Pasupatīswaram’on the deity of Kathmandu shrine and ‘Sri Satyanarayanam’ on the Badarinath deity. This rāga again corresponds to the Miyanki Todi of Hindusthani, believed to be an invention of Tansen. Just as Tyagaraja popularised Kharaharapiṇī, Sivapantuvarali was popularised by Mūthuswamī Dikshitar.

Not only in the handling of rāgas, but also in the tālās, Dikshitar has shown the influence of Hindusthani music on his compositions. The vilambita laya he has used and the madhyamakāla sāhitya piece that he has followed, is a general practice in the Hindusthani system.

Another interesting fact is that the first Arab scale corresponds to Mayamalavagaula rāga of Carnatic system. Arab music in turn exerted great influence on Hindusthani music. This can be the reason why Dikshitar used Mayamalavagaula for his first composition.

“Through his kritīs in diverse rāgas of Hindusthani origin, some of which are in praise of deities in the Temples of the North, Dikshitar has endeavoured to combine, as it were the two systems of music, and spread
the divine message of the North in the South. He can therefore be considered to be the foremost musical integrator of India.”

Philosophy in Dikshitar Kritīs

Muthuswami Dikshitar was a Vēdāntin, in the tradition of Sri Sankara who believed in one Supreme power and considered the deities worshipped as manifestations of that Supreme Power who transcended name and form. When Tyagaraja describes Nāda as the body of Lord Śiva (Nāda tanum anīṣam-Chittaranjanani rāga), Dikshitar describes Dēvi as the form of 22 śrutis and the seven notes. He believed that the creator the Parabrahma is one and omnipotent. The object of their worship is to enable us to withdraw our minds from attachment to worldly pleasures and concentrate upon the form conceived as divine and the worship of personal God (Saguṇopāsana) is but a step in the realisation of the Nirgunabrahma within us. Karma, bhakti, and jnāna had an important place in his daily life.

In the kriti ‘Māye tvam’ in Tarangini (Charukesī) rāga, Dikshitar addresses the Supreme Goddess as both ‘Upāya’ (way of attaining goal) and ‘Upēya’ (goal).

The highest expression of Advaita is seen in his Purvi kriti ‘Srī guruguhasya Dāsoham’ . In this kriti he declares that he is the servant of Guruguha or he is Guruguha himself, the embodiment of knowledge (Aham brahmasmi)

‘Srī Guruguhasya dāsoham
Nochet Chidguruguha īvaham’
The kriti ‘Tyāgarājādanyām’ in Darbar rāga is also a philosophical kriti.

**Sishya Parampara of Dikshitar**

Muthuswami Dikshitar was an ardent pilgrim and may be due to this reason, he did not have as many Sishyas as those Saint Tyagaraja had. At Tiruvarur where he spent most of his life term, he had a gurukula and taught music to eminent musicians, including his brothers, Balaswami and Chinnaswami, who were not beginners. Some of his disciples whom the magnum opus ‘Sangīta Sampradāya Pradarsini’ of Subbarama Dikshitar mentions are,

1. Tirukkadayar Bharati – An expert in Tamil and Music
2. Avudayarkovil Vina Venkataramayya
3. Tevar Subrahmanyayya
4. Koranad Ramaswami – expert in lakshana, lakshya and Bharatam
5. Tiruvalandur Bilva Vanam – expert in Nagaswaram
6. Tiruvarur Ayyaswami – Composer of many tana varnams
7. Pallathurugudi Ammini
8. Suddhamaddalam Tambiyappa
9. Tiruvarur Kamalam
10. Ponniah
11. Chinniah
12. Vadivelu
13. Sivanandam

The last four were brothers and were collectively known as ‘Tanjore Quartette’.
The Navagraha kriti ‘Brihaspate’ in Atana was composed by Muthuswami Dikshitar to cure the stomach pain of Suddhamaddalam Thambiyappa. Tiruvarur Kamalam was a famous dancer of Tiruvarur and it was for her that Dikshitar composed two danceforms in Telugu which was performed in the temple. The Tanjore Quartette happened to witness the performance and they realised the versatility of Dikshitar and requested him to stay at Tanjore to teach them music. Dikshitar agreed and later dubbed his sishyas as ‘Bhārata Shrēśhtakal’. As a dakshiṇa to their master they composed a group of nine kritīs collectively called as ‘Navaratanamālīka’ and dedicated them to Dikshitar which include the kritīs ‘Sāṭilēni Guruguha’ in Purvikalyani and ‘Māyātītasvarūpiṇī’ in Mayamalavagaula. Both the kritīs have ‘Guruguha’ mudra which creates confusion in the authorship of these kritīs.

Last Days

Muthuswami Dikshitar, like the other two among the ‘Musical Trinities’, could foretell his last days. He passed away in the year 1834. Once when he was in meditation, he had a vision of Goddess Annapurṇēśwari of Kaśi, who Chidambaranatha Yogi had told him would give him salvation. He performed pooja and asked his disciples to sing the kriti ‘Meenākshi mē mudam’ in Purvikalyani rāga which he had already composed. They were asked to repeat the line ‘Meenalōchani pāsamōchani’ and Muthuswami Dikshitar shuffled of his mortal coil and reached Skandagiri. His Samādhi can be seen at Ettayapuram even today.
Foot Note


2. Vidya Sankar, ‘Aesthetics and Scientific Values in Carnatic Music’, Chapter 14, Pg. 179


4. M.S. Ramasami, ‘The Ambrosia of Muthuswami Dikshitar-Part II’ Pg.23


7. K.T. Ravindranath, ‘Karnataka Sangeeta Charitram’ Pg. 216


9. Publications Division, ‘Cultural leaders Of India- Composers’ Pg 16

10&11. S. A. Durga, ‘Musical Heritage of Sri Muthuswami Dikshitar’, Chapter- Literary excellence in Muthuswami Dikshitar’s Compositions, Pg.57