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Descriptive Dikshitar

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Abstract: Muthuswamy Dikshitar's services to music, culture and religion are unforgettable. Dikshitar occupies a prominent place among the composer of group kritis in the musical history of India. The songs of Dikshitar are examples of every principle of musical excellence and the embodiment of all that is best in lakshya and lakshana Sangita. To enunciate a few, he is the first composer to introduce Samashti charanam (capsule form of anupallavi and charanam succeeded by a madhyamakala sahyam or chittaswaram) in his compositions. Dikshitar who was a vainika has also depicted various beautiful gamakas and has also musically proved their significance through his numerous compositions. Being a Sanskrit scholar, his flawless incorporation of Raga mudra (inclusion of the name of the raga in which the composition is set also by giving a complete meaning to the lyric) in almost all the kritis and the grammar are prominent examples for his scholarship. His signature style of description (especially seen in Navagraha kritis) proves his genius in astrology as well. This article deals with Dikshitar's excellence in various respects in terms of music, language and sciences with special reference to his Group Kritis.

Index terms: Carnatic, Composer, Kritis, Music, Raga, Tala, Trinity

1. INTRODUCTION

18th and 19th centuries were the foremost notable period for Indian music when three of the great composers of Carnatic music system lived and composed songs. These three immortals - Tyagaraja, Muthuswamy Dikshitar and Syama Sastri - constitute the musical Trinity of South Indian music. They were prolific composers and created a replacement era within the history of Carnatic music by bringing a few noticeable change in what was the prevailing Carnatic music tradition. The trinity has composed various songs in Sanskrit apart from Tyagaraja and Syama sastris who have composed in Telugu as well. Even then, taking to account the treatment of Sanskrit language by each one of them, we can find Dikshitar's approach much formal and complex than other twosome. The way he addresses Gods or Goddesses itself is in high terms of respect. Unlike Tyagaraja, Dikshitar doesn't bring in any trait of mythological references or stories. It is his signature to bring in all the descriptions or characteristics of the subject the kriti is upon. His selection of words and phrases for this purpose is incredible.

2. GROUP KRITIS

Muthuswami Dikshitar, in his lifetime, created near 500 differing kinds of kritis that formed an outsized collection of songs under each type. He has to his credit the largest number of group kritis. A number of them are Shodasa Ganapati Kritis, Guruguha Vibhakti kritis, Kamalamba Navavarna Kritis, Navagraha Kritis, Nilotpalamba vibhakti Kritis, Panchalinga Sthala kritis, Rama vibhakti Kritis, Abhayamba vibhakti Kritis, and several other compositions.

TABLE I

NAVAGRAHA KRITIS	On 9 Planets
PANCHALINGASTHALA KRITIS	On Lord Shiva as the epithet of natural forces
KAMALAMBA NAVAVARANAM	On Goddess Kamalamba
ABHAYAMBA NAVAVARANAM	On Goddess Abhayamba
NEELOTPALAMBA NAVAVARANAM	On Goddess Nilotpalamba
VIBHAKTHI KRITIS	Depicting vibhakti in sanskrit
SHODASHA GANAPATHI KRITIS	On various iconic Ganapati

2.1 Panchalinga sthala kritis

TABLE II

1	Chintayama	Bhairavi	Rupakam	Earth	Ekamreshwara	Kamakshi	Kanchipuram
2	Arunachalanadam	Saranga	Rupakam	Fire	Arunachalaeswara	ApeethaKiyamba	Tiruvannamalai
3	Jambupathe	Yamuna Kalyani	Rupakam	Water	Jambukeswara	Akhilandeswari	Jambukeshwaram
4	Anandanatana Prakasham	Kedaram	Misra Chappu	Ether	Nataraja	Sivakami	Chidmbaram
5	Sri Kalahastheesha	Huseni	Khanda Chappu	Air	Kalahastheeswara	Gnanaprasoonambika	Kalahasthi

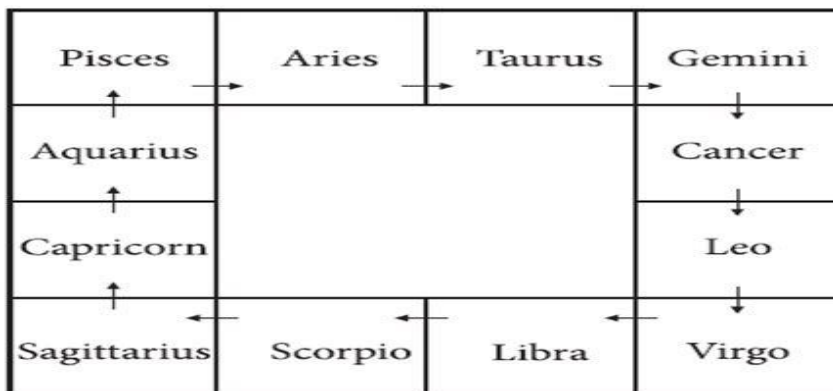
2.2 Navagraha Kritis

Among his group kritis, the Navagraha kritis are unique gift to classical music. There are a set of nine kritis in praise of nine planets ie; Surya (Sun), Chandra (Moon), and Angaraka (Mars), Buddha (Mercury), Brihaspati (Jupiter), Sukra (Venus), Sanisvara (Saturn) and Rahu and Ketu (Chaya grahas). Of these, the first seven kritis are on the seven principal planets. They are also called Vaara Kirtanas after the seven days of a week. They are respectively set in seven suladi talas. Dikshitar's mastery over the science of astrology is clearly revealed in these Kirtanas. The last two pieces may be regarded as supplementary, since the suladi talas are covered by the first kritis in the sequential order.

TABLE III

Suryamurte	Sowrashtram	Chathurasra Dhruvam	Sun
Chandram bhaja manasa	Asaveri	Chathurasra Matyam	Moon
Angarakam	Surutti	Chathurasra Rupakam	Mars
Bhudhamashrayami	Nattakurinji	Misra Jhampa	Mercury
Brihaspate	Atana	Tisra Triputa	Jupiter
Sri Shukra bhagavantam	Paras	Khanda Ata	Venus
Divakara tanujam	Yadukulakambhoji	Chathurasra Eka	Saturn
Mahasuram Ketum	Shanmughapriya	Rupakam	Ketu
Smaramyaham	Ramapriya	Rupakam	Rahu

	12	1	2	3	
	Jupiter (Guru)	Mars (Kuja)	Venus (Sukra)	Mercury (Budha)	
11	Saturn (Sani)	Lordships of Planets		Moon (Chandra)	4
10	Saturn (Sani)			Sun (Surya)	5
	Jupiter (Guru)	Mars (Kuja)	Venus (Sukra)	Mercury (Budha)	
	9	8	7	6	



2.3 Kamalamba Navavarnam

These are 9 kritis in Kamalamba. They are :-

TABLE IV

No	KRITI	RAGA	TALA
1	Kamalambike(Dhyana)	Thodi	-
2	KamalambamSamrakshatumam	Anandabhairavi	Tripata
3	Kamalambambhajare	Kalyani	Adi
4	Sri Kamalambikaaya	Sankarabharanam	Tisra Eka
5	Sri Kamalambikayai	Kamboji	Ata
6	Sri Kamalambaya	Bhairavi	Jhampa
7	Sri Kamalambikaya	Punnagavarali	Tisra Eka
8	Sri Kamalambikayam	Shahana	Tripata
9	Sri Kamalambika	Khanda	Adi
10	Sri KamalambaJayathy	Ahiri	Eka
11	Sri Kamalambike(Mangala kirthana)	Sri	Khanda Eka

In the kriti ‘Kamalambam Bhajare’, in Kalyani, the word ‘Kamalamba’ occurs four times, but with different meanings. Thus, an example for yamaka is seen here:- ie;

- a) Kamalambika- diety of Tiruvarur
- b) Kamala as Lekshmi
- c) Kamalapuram- Another name of Tiruvarur

d) Kamalavadanam- Lotus faced

2.4 Abhayamba Navavarna kritis

These are nine kritis in praise of Abhayamba, the presiding deity in the temple of Mayavaram. They are :-

TABLE V

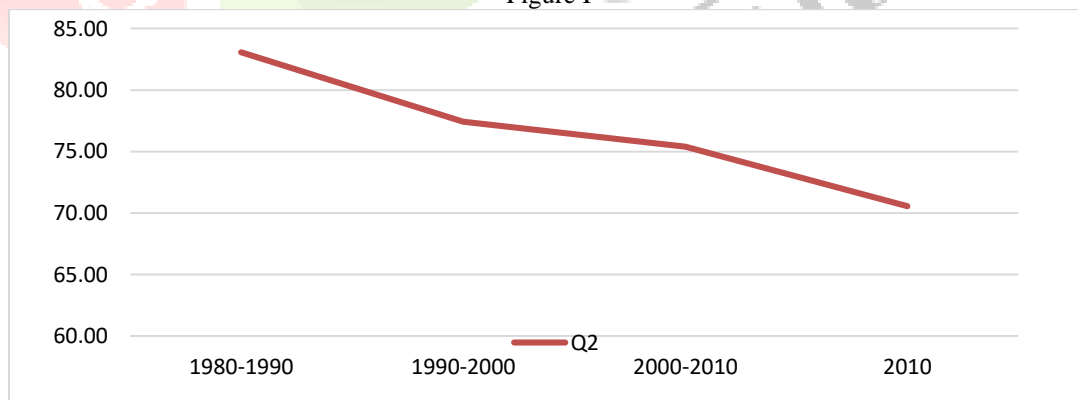
No	KRITI	RAGA	TALA
1	Sadasraya	Shanmughapriya	Adi
2	AbhayambaJagadamba	Kalyani	Adi
3	AryamAbhayambam	Bhairavi	Adi
4	GirijayaAjaya	Sankarabharanam	Adi
5	Abhayambikayai	Yadukulakamboji	Roopaka
6	Abhayambikayah	Kedaragoula	MisraJhampa
7	Abhayambikayah	Kedaram	Adi
8	Abhayambikayam	Shahana	Tripata
9	DakshayaniAbhayambika	Thodi	Roopaka
10	Sri Abhayamba(Mani pravalakriti- Sanskrit, Telugu & Tamil)	Sri (Mangalam)	Adi

3. RECENT TRENDS

Although Dikshitar kritis are high in essence, in terms of Lyrics and Music, in the light of recent trends of teaching learning and performing of Group kritis, a survey was conducted to find out the following information. The observation recorded is on the basis of responses received from various musicians, academicians and students of Carnatic Music, analyzing the question for the past 4 decades spanning 1980-1990, 1990-2000, 2000-2010,2010- 2020 . The questionnaire was sent over to 100 people, 25 each of performing artists, academicians, students and connoisseurs across India. Each questions were graded in Outstanding, Good, Average, and Below Average. The consolidated responses were tabulated and the following graph trend was obtained.

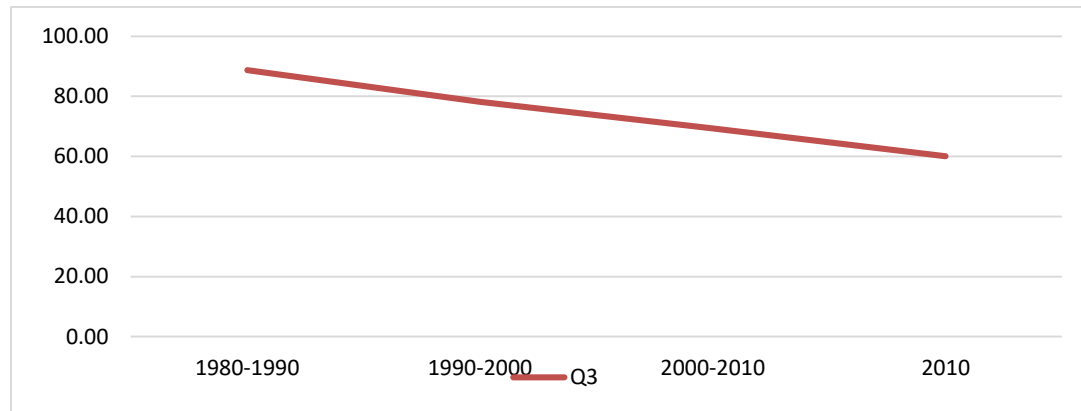
3.1 Teaching Group kritis of Diskhitar

Figure I



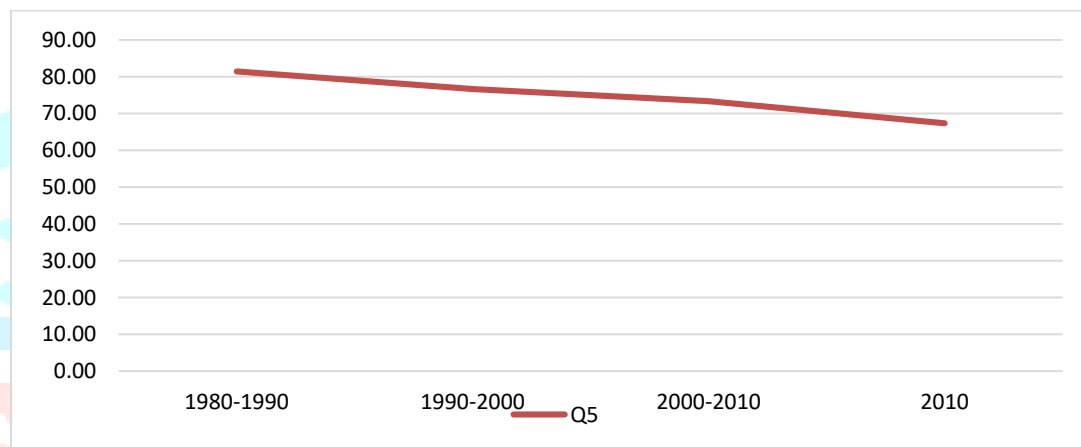
3.2 Inclusion of group kritis in Concerts

Figure II



3.3 Sense of Appreciation in Rasikas for group Kritis of Dikshitar

Figure III



4. CONCLUSION

The contribution of Muthuswamy Dikshitar to South Indian music is invaluable in terms of Music, rhythm, language and science. But due to the varying nature in the trend of teaching performing learning and appreciating, the level of assimilation, interpretation and understanding of some of his works especially group kritis, have been slightly dilapidated. However consistent efforts are taken by conventional academicians and performers to preserve his monumental works and instill it to the younger generation. Musicians are keen in propagating his not-so popular musical works. It is doubtless that Dikshitar's music will continue to live on, in spite of any development change of musical experiences.

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