

Topic: Dīkṣitar and the North: Tracing Hindustani Threads in the Carnatic Fabric

Speaker: Vidvān K. Bharat Sundar

Date & Time: 18.12.2025; 8.05AM

Venue: Kasthuri Srinivasan Hall, The Music Academy

Abstract:

This lec-dem focuses on how Śrī Muttusvāmi Dīkṣitar handled North Indian rāga-s in his compositions. While the common narrative attributes these influences to his pilgrimage to Banaras, this session digs deeper, showing that the roots of this cultural exchange extend far beyond a single journey. By revisiting the culturally vibrant South India of the 16th and 17th centuries—already absorbing North Indian rāga-s, aesthetics, and ideas—we understand how this flow of musical thought predates Dīkṣitar. *Caturdaṇḍi Prakāśika* of Vēṅkaṭamakhin, whose parampara Dīkṣitar belonged to, was a foundational treatise that later helped Bhatkhande formulate the Hindustani rāga-s into the *thāt* system. The older *Prabandha* tradition, which forms the base of Dhrupad music, also reaches Dīkṣitar through the Caturdaṇḍi lineage.

The rāga-s chosen for this lecture—Yamunā, Jujāvanti, Bṛndāvani, Hamvīru, and Rāmkali—are still sung in the Hindustani tradition today, with melodic structures strikingly close to Dīkṣitar’s handling. Rather than directly imitating their Hindustani counterparts, Dīkṣitar ingeniously “Carnaticized” these rāga-s by using existing rakti rāga-s as structural anchors. His characteristic use of *mīṇḍ*, his preference for Rūpaka and Tisra ēka tāla-s, and the dignified, unhurried gait of these kṛti-s reveal a gentle echo of the Dhrupad aesthetic.

The session will also explore the Tanjore courts—a cultural crossroads where Hindustani musicians were patronised long before Dīkṣitar’s time. Together, these threads illuminate Dīkṣitar not merely as a composer influenced by the North, but as a brilliant synthesiser who wove North Indian rāga-s seamlessly into the Carnatic aesthetic.