

Topic: The *Vīṇā* tradition of Muttusvāmi Dīkṣitar

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Abstract:

Nādajyōti Śrī Muttusvāmi Dīkṣitar was, by his own admission, a Vaiṇika Gāyaka. He also puts the epithet Vaiṇika before the word Gāyaka. The profundity of this is quite striking. The natural outcome of his being a *Vīṇā* Player (Vaiṇika) is the obvious reflection of the character of *Vīṇā* music in his compositions. Most of his kṛti-s are in slow tempo or cauka kāla. And almost all his kṛti-s have a medium tempo or madhyama kāla passage towards the end of a paragraph, which is mostly in the caraṇa of the kṛti, sometimes in the anupallavi and pallavi too. Dīkṣitar having spent quite a bit of time in Varanasi was influenced by Hindustani Music where in the Bīnkar (Vaiṇika in the North of India) tradition, the recital commences in a very slow paced ālāp and then goes on to pick up speed with the jōḍ and jhāla. The Bīnkar-s were famous for the Dhrupad tradition and this pace is the core identity of Dīkṣitar's compositions, and he made it a style his own to the point where anything slow pace has come to be known as Dīkṣitar-style kṛti!

Secondly the gamaka oriented phrases in Dīkṣitar compositions are best expressed on the *vīṇā* when played in the Gāyaki style. In the composition mīnākṣī mēmudam dēhi Dīkṣitar talks about *vīṇā* gāna daśagamakakriyē, clearly talking about *vīṇā* music as being distinct and representative of the 10 gamaka-s. There are 15 gamaka-s given in the Saṅgīta Sampradāya Pradarśini and some of them will be demonstrated with respect to Dīkṣitar compositions, in particular, the jāru-s which are so special to *vīṇā*.

Thirdly, an examination of the splitting of sāhitya in his compositions is aligned almost always with the playing of the *vīṇā*. This we will demonstrate with some telling examples, to show how the word in a kṛti very rarely split between the sāriṇi and pañcama strings of the *vīṇā*. The fact that Dīkṣitar composed short samaṣṭi caraṇa kṛti-s to convey the characteristic of many a rare rāga through prayōga-s natural to the *vīṇā*, is very valuable in inferring that Dīkṣitar was the quintessential *vīṇā* player who expressed his musical creations thinking with and through his *vīṇā*.