

Topic: The Guruguha Vibhakti kṛti-s of Muttusvāmi Dīkṣitar

Speaker: Dr Meenakshi (Sumathi) Krishnan with Ms Snigdha Desiraju, Ms Ragasudha, Ms Nandhika, Sri Bharat Narayan & Sri Sivaramakrishnan (Students of Advanced School of Carnatic Music)

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Venue: Kasthuri Srinivasan Hall, The Music Academy

Abstract:

Muttusvāmi Dīkṣitar's performance of austerities in Tiruttani was significant in the history of Carnatic music as it was the beginning of his life as a composer. The two words Guru and Guha highlight his gratitude and devotion to his Guru and his obeisance to Guha or Murugan. He took this as his signature, his vāggēyakāra mudra in his songs. Murugan is known to be jñānamūrti or one who imparts knowledge and hence this was the ideal place for his meditation and dhyāna. The eight Vibhakti kṛti-s that followed were masterpieces, each one showcasing / highlighting his surrender to his Guru, his knowledge of Sanskrit and his Śrīvidyā Upāsana.

This series has no sthala purāṇa, no sthala vṛkṣa or vimāna etc which are common in his other kṣētra kṛti-s, but the underlying theme of all the songs is the Guru, who is able to guide us and keep us away from māyā and the darkness of ignorance.

He starts with the rāga māyāmālavagaula, symbolizing the beginning. There are no prati madhyama rāga kṛti-s. There is just one vivādi rāga, bhānumati, in the series and some lesser known rāga-s like balahamsa and udayaravivacandrika. Unlike the navāvaraṇa kṛti-s which are mammoth compositions in many rakti rāga-s, these are mostly short but powerful kṛti-s in diverse tāla-s.

A careful examination of these songs shows that Dīkṣitar unravels his Śrīvidyā Upāsana, an esoteric practice rooted in the śākta tradition, in a subtle manner. Some thoughts may be explicit, others may be hidden and yet others may be open to interpretation. In this lecdem the songs will be presented by some students of the Advanced school of Carnatic Music.