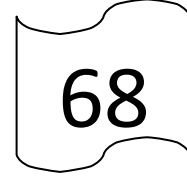


## A BRIEF STUDY OF PANCHA BHUTA LINGA KRITIS OF

### MUTHUSWAMY DEEKSHITAR

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#### ABSTRACT

The basis of all creation is the five elements called the Panchabhutas. They are: Earth/Prithvi, Water/ Jala, Fire/Agni, Air /Vayu and Ether/Akasha.

Lord Krishna, in Chapter 7 of the Bhagavad Gita, describes the Panchabutras as:

भूमिरापोऽनलो वायुः खं मनो बुद्धिरेव च ।

अहङ्कार इतीयं मे भिन्ना प्रकृतिरष्टधा ॥ 4॥

*bhūmir-āpo 'nalo vāyuh kham mano buddhir eva cha \*

*ahankāra itīyam me bhinnā prakṛtir aṣṭadhā \*

*“Earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, intellect, and ego are the eight components of my material energy.”*

-BG 7.4

The Taittiriya Upanishad states that “All creation is made up of these five elements which came from the Supreme Being. From the self (atman) space came into being, from space came air, from air came fire, from fire water, from water earth, and from earth man. Man has within himself the self (atman).”

On the same lines, in South India, are five important temples, all dedicated to Lord Shiva, each one of them representing him as one of the five elements.

Muthuswamy Deekshitar, an eighteenth century Vaggeyakara and the youngest of the famed Carnatic Music Trinity has dedicated exquisite songs on these 5 temples.

Element	Earth	Water	Fire	Air	Space
<b>Temple/ form of Lord Shiva</b>	Kanchipuram-Ekamranatha	Tiruvanaikkaval-Jambukeshwara	Tiruvannamalai-Arunachaleshwara	SriKalahasti-SriKalahastishwara	Chidambaram-Nataraja
<b>Kriti</b>	Chintaya Makanda	Jambupathe	Arunachala Natham	Sri Kalahastisha	Ananda Natana Prakasham
<b>Raga</b>	Bhairavi	Yamuna Kalyani	Saranga	Huseni	Kedaram
<b>Tala</b>	Rupakam	Rupakam/TisraEka	Rupakam/TisraEka	Jhampa	Misra Chapu

**AIM:** This article attempts at understanding the Sangita and Sahitya of the Pancha Bhuta kritis of Muthuswamy Deekshitar.



**KEYWORDS:** Pancha Bhuta Kritis, Muthuswamy Deekshitar, Elements of Nature, Shiva kritis

## INTRODUCTION:

All creation that we see around us traces its roots to the Pancha Bhutas (or) Five Elements of Nature- Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Ether.

Mahakavi Kalidasa in Abhijnana Shakuntalam pays tribute to Lord Shiva as the source of all creation- from whom the Panchabhutas have emerged.

या सृष्टिः स्रष्टुराद्या वहति विधिहुतं या हवियां च होत्री

ये हे कालं विधत्तः श्रुतिविषयगुणा या स्थिता व्याप्य विश्वम् ।

यामाहुः सर्वभूतप्रकृतिरिति यया प्राणिनः प्राणवन्तः

प्रत्यक्षाभिः प्रपन्नस्तनुभिरवतु वस्ताभिरष्टाभिरीशंः ॥१॥

## Lord Shiva as Ashtamurthy:

*The Eight (Ashta) forms of the Lord:* The Vedas speak of the Ashta Murthys' (forms) of Lord Shiva. Sarva, Bhava, Rudra, Ugra, Bheema, Pasupathi, Mahadeva, Ishana are the eight forms of Lord Shiva which correspond to Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Ether, Leader, Moon and Sun respectively. The Shiva and Brahmanda Puranas help us trace the locations of these Linga-s geographically.

Sarva- Pruthvi Linga (Earth), Kancheepuram, Tamil Nadu

Bhava - Jala Linga (Water), Thiruvanaikoil(Jambukeswaram), Tamil Nadu

Rudra- Agni or Thejo (Divine Light/ Fire) Linga, Tiruvannamalai, Tamilnadu

Ugra - Vayu Linga (Air), Sri Kalahasti, Andhra Pradesh

Bheema - Aakasha Linga (Space/ Ether), Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu

Pasupathi - Yajamana Linga (Leader/ Lord), Kathmandu, Nepal

Mahadeva - Chandra Linga (Moon), West Bengal

Ishana - Surya Linga (Sun), Konark Temple, Orissa.

**Muthuswamy Deekshitar**, an eighteenth century Vaggeyakara and the youngest of the famed Carnatic Music Trinity has dedicated exquisite songs on the 5 temples for Pancha Bhutas.

It is not clear if the Vaggeyakara himself intended them to be grouped together, though they do have certain common features. All the five songs have the standard kriti structure of Pallavi, Anupallavi and Charanam.

It is nothing but astounding to note how Muthuswamy Deekshitar uses the most appropriate words, quotes instances from Purana-s, chooses Raga-s and Tala-s along with special geographical indicators and Raga mudras to bring out the essence of that particular element of nature and take one on a pilgrimage to experience Lord Shiva enshrined in the holy temple towns of South India.

This article shall cover all the aspects mentioned above in the light of Panch Bhuta Linga Kritis of



Muthuswamy Deekshitar.

*Contributing to the wealth of information in a very small way, out of immense love and admiration for Muthuswamy Deekshitar and from my little understanding of his works, this piece is being written.*

## 1. Element Earth

Lord Shiva in the form of earth is worshipped in Kanchipuram. Here he is Ekamranatha, residing at the root of a mango tree. He is hence also referred to as mAmUlanAtha- the one who resides at the base of a mango tree.

Muthuswamy Deekshitar has dedicated the kriti “चिन्तय माकन्द मूल कन्दं(Chintaya Makanda Mula Kandam)” in raga Bhairavi to the Lord as the element Earth.

A panel depicting Shiva as Somaskanda (Shiva with Uma and Skanda) is present below this mango tree and hence the second line of the song propitiates Somaskanda. - *cEtaH Sri sOmAskandam*. In the anupallavi, Deekshitar states that Shiva’s feet provide empires, indirectly referring to the Pallava Empire that flourished from Kanchipuram. An empire is also an *earthly* possession.

In the Tantra Shastras, the element earth is associated with the Muladhara Chakra and the colour assigned is Deep Red/ Maroon. In the charanam, Deekshitar describes the Lord to be residing in the holy town of Kanchi which has the colour of Manikya stones (Rubies) - *mANikya-maya kAnchI sadanaM*

Deekshitar goes on to paint the beauty of Lord Shiva in our minds, saying he excels Manmatha (God of Love) - *anga saundarya vijita madanaM*. Deekshitar also subtly indicates that Shiva has won over Manmatha - Puranic incident of burning him with the third eye and winning over the earthly emotion Lust which makes sure all living beings and enraptured within the illusion called Maya.

उमालिङ्गनसङ्क्रान्तकुचकङ्कणमुद्रितम् ।  
लिङ्गमेकाम्रनाथस्य सैकतं समुपास्महे ॥

*I worship the Lingam of Sand of Ekamranatha, which has the imprint of Uma’s bust and bracelet from her embrace.*

• *Kamakshi Vilasa, Markandeya Purana*

The last lines speak of the deity as *Bhairavi prasanga* (embraced by Parvati) and *pRthivi lingam* (Earth Linga). This brings in the raga mudra and also refers to the puranic incident here where Parvati worshipped Shiva in the form of a sand linga. To test her devotion, Shiva sent a flood through the river Kampa which threatened the linga. Parvati in her anxiety embraced it and Shiva was pleased.

## 2. Element Water

Lord Shiva as water is worshipped at Tiruvanaikka near Trichy, Tamilnadu. The sanctum of Shiva always has water from the Kaveri seeping in and floods the shrine during monsoons. Deekshitar’s song on the Lord here is ‘जम्बूपते (Jambupathe)’ in raga Yamuna (Kalyani).

This is a song steeped in fluid symbolism. Deekshitar uses a multitude of synonyms to describe Lord Shiva, relating him to water/ fluids. The music of the kriti (the pace and characteristic gamakas) gives the experience of grand flow of Kaveri at the temple town.

The Pallavi starts as a prayer, asking the Lord to give the *nectar* (fluid) of bliss- knowledge about the Atman- *nijAnandAmRta bOdhama dEhi*.

The Anupallavi states that He is worshipped by Brahma who is seated on the (water-born) lotus- *ambujAsanAdi sakala dEva namana*

And that He quenches the fires (sorrows) of the heart- *hRdaya tApOpaSamana*

Deekshitar then describes Him as the Lord of the rivers Sindhu, Ganga, Kaveri, Yamuna (also the raga mudra)- *ambudhi gangA kAvErI yamuna*

The Lord of Goddess Akhilandeswari who has a throat like a conch (which comes from water) -



*kambu kaNThyakhilANDESvarI ramaNa*

The Charanam describes the sthala puranam and says that the Lord here is the water Linga, who was worshipped by the daughter of the mountains (Goddess Parvati, here as Akhilandeshwari)-  
*parvatajA prArthitAblinga vibhO*

*This is also a reference to the special mid-day puja performed even this day to Lord Jambukeshwara, where the priest wears the jewelry and sari of the goddess and carries all the puja essentials from Akhilandeshwari shrine to Jambukeshwara shrine signifying Goddess Parvati worshipping Lord Shiva at that time of the day.*

Residing at sAmajATavi (the forest of elephants)- *sAmajATavI nilaya* – literal translation of the name of the temple town *Tiru-Anaikka*

Deekshitar also praises the Lord as *karuNA sudhA sindhO* -ocean of the nectar of mercy.

Another very interesting feature in this kriti is multiple references to concepts from Advaita Vedanta.

Phrases like *nija-Ananda-amRta bOdhaM dEhi, anirvacanIya nAda bindO, nirvikalpaka samAdhi nishTha, nirviSEsha caitanya* serve as great examples to illustrate the depths of Advaita Vedanta Muthuswamy Deekshitar had imbibed and practiced.

This can be seen from another perspective too. Lord Jambukeshwara and Goddess Akhilandeshwari are enshrined in this temple in the bhaava of a Guru and Shishya. This is followed to the extent that there are no kalyana utsava celebrations (celestial wedding ceremony) for them. The intricacies of Advaita Vedanta are to be learnt from a qualified Guru. Hence Deekshitar addresses Lord Shiva as his Guru- *Guruguha gurO*.

### 3. Element Fire

Lord Shiva manifests as fire at Tiruvannamalai called Arunachalanatha. The Goddess accompanies Him here as Apitakuchamba.

जननात्कमलालये दर्शनादभ्रसादसि ॥

काश्यन्तु मरणान्मुक्तिः स्मरणादरुणाचले ॥

*To be born in Tiruvarur, to see Chidambaram, to die in Benares, or merely to think/contemplate of Arunachala, is to be assured of Liberation.*

-*Arunaachala maahaatmyam, Skaanda Purana*

This sloka from SkAnda Purana talks about the underlying principle behind the sacred temple town/hill-Tiruvannamalai.

Even if one is not able to travel to Tiruvannamalai, the mere thought of the sacred hill is enough to grant Moksha (liberation).

This thought has been reflected by Muthuswamy Deekshitar in the composition ‘अरुणाचल नाथं स्मरामि (Arunachalanatham Smarami)’ dedicated to Lord Shiva at Tiruvannamalai.

The song begins with the word *smarAmi*, teaching the importance of meditating upon Lord Arunachala. This is repeated in the Anupallavi too through the phrase *smaraNAt kaivalya prada charaNAravindaM* [the one whose lotus feet grant Moksha (liberation) just upon remembrance].

Deekshitar extols the Lord resemble countless Suns at dawn- *taruNa-Aditya kOTi saMkASa*

Lord Shiva is eulogized as the ancient effulgent Shiva Linga.-*aprAkRta tEjOmaya lingaM*

It has been scientifically proven that the rock of Arunachala is one of the oldest on earth and has a fiery origin, either a volcanic eruption or a meteor strike.

Deekshitar states that the Lord bears a Saranga (deer) in His hand, thereby bringing in the raga mudra. Taking Fire as the theme, Raga chosen for this kriti is Saranga which itself is a synonym for camphor, an easily flammable substance-*karadhRta sArangaM*.

The madhyamakAla charanam begins with *viprOttama viShEshAntarangam*, reminding the special grace shown to Gnanasambanda at this shrine.

The last line once again brings in the fire motif *sva-prakASa jita sOma-agni patangam-* the



Lord's effulgence puts the sun, the moon and fire to shame.

As per the Mantra Shastras, रँ is the Beejakshara/ Seed Syllable for element Fire/ Agni.

Numerous words incorporating the letter रँ (ra) and its derivatives can be found throughout the kriti. Words with the letter रँ can be found for a total of thirty two times in this kriti.

The number 32 is important because:

3 + 2=5 denoting Panchakshara mantra (5-lettered mantra of Lord Shiva) and the Pancha Bhutas whose source is Lord Shiva

3 x 2=6 denotes the 6 faces of Lord Shiva (including the Ado Mukha) and symbolically represents the Rupaka Tala to which this kriti is set to.

#### 4. Element Air

Lord Shiva as Air/Vayu Linga is propitiated at SriKalahasti in Andhra Pradesh through the kriti 'श्री काळहस्तीश (Sri Kalahastisha)' by Muthuswamy Deekshitar. A flickering lamp in the airless sanctum shows the manifestation of Shiva as air in this temple.

Deekshitar describes Lord Shiva as a gentle breeze to those who have surrendered at thy feet- *Srita janAvana samIrAkAra*

The Anupallavi describes Lord Shiva to be the vital breath for even Indra, Brahma and Vishnu, indicating that He is the life sustaining oxygen. Deekshitar employs the exact word "prāna maya kosha" to denote the Prāna Vāyu- *pAkAri vidhi hari prANa-maya kOSa*

This phrase also houses the raga mudra as *prANamayakOshAnIla bhUmi salila agni prakAsha*. In the Dikshitar system this raga was called UshAni.

The charanam says the Lord here is the consort of Gnanaprasoonambika.

The last line speaks of Kannappa Nayanar as the huntsman whose Bhakti brought fame to the Lord.

#### 5. Element Space

Chidambaram is the shrine where Shiva is worshipped as Space. The sanctum houses the world-famous icon of Nataraja, the dancing deity beside which is an empty space referred to as Chidambara Rahasyam/ the secret of Chidambaram.

The very word Chidambaram refers to the space within the heart of the devotee where the Lord is said to be in cosmic dance as depicted as Nataraja. This space is also called daharAkAsha.

Deekshitar's kiti 'आनन्द नटन प्रकाशं (Ananda naTana prakAsham)' in Kedara raga is on the lord of Chidambaram. The song begins by describing the Lord as being effulgent in dance accompanying Goddess Sivakamavalli.

The Anupallavi states that he pervades daharAkAsha and grants salvation- *bhukti mukti prada daharAkASam*

The last line of the anupallavi has the legend behind the temple as it states that Shiva displayed himself with an uplifted foot to Patanjali and Vyaghrapada here- *divya patanjali vyAghra pAda darShita kuncitAbja charaNam*

The charanam, continuing on the space theme, says the Lord bears the moon and the Ganga and has a blue neck (the colour blue indicating space)- *SItAMSu gangA dharaM nIla kandharaM*

The importance of Chidambaram as the foremost Shaivaite shrine is emphasised when the composer says Nataraja here is the basis for all shrines beginning with Kedara. The raga name is also incorporated here- *SrI kEdArAdi kshEtrAdhAram*

Legend has it that 3000 sages left for Chidambaram from Kailasa and on reaching their destination found one missing. The Lord then indicated that He was that person and counting Him in would make 3000- *bhU-sura tri-sahasra munISvaraM*

The song, being an offering to a dancing deity has sollukattus that makes one visualise and experience the essence of Akasha tattva.



## CONCLUSION

Experiencing divinity in everything around is a great virtue. Lord Shiva as the primordial teacher leads by example. He himself takes the forms of the Panchabhutas to teach us how important it is to respect and live with nature.

Muthuswamy Deekshitar reiterates the same teachings as aesthetically pleasing, beautiful kritis with the description of Lord Shiva in the five important temple towns.

The way Deekshitar includes or hints at subtle details is astounding.

Throughout the Five kritis, the Goddess is mentioned but differently in each kriti.

Kriti	Description of Goddess
Chintaya Makanda	There is no consort mentioned, for there is no shrine for Her in the temple. All the Shiva temples of Kanchipuram have no shrine for Devi and the only Devi shrine is that of Kamakshi. Hence, the Goddess is just indicated at the end of the kriti as- <i>bhairavI prasangaM</i>
Jambupate	The Goddess here is Akhilandeshwari and has a separate temple within the temple complex dedicated to Her. To indicate the distance between the shrines of Shiva and Parvati here, Deekshitar mentions Her on at the end of the Anupallavi as- <i>akhilANDESvarI ramaNa</i>
Arunachala Natham	Both, Shiva and Parvati's shrines are quite closeby in Tiruvannamalai. To show this, the Goddess is mentioned at the second line of Pallavi itself- <i>apIta kucAmbA samEtam</i>
Sri Kalahastisha	The charanam begins as <i>jnAna prasUnAmbika patE</i> denoting the distance between Shiva and Parvati's shrines.
Ananda Natana Prakasham	Goddess Shivakamavalli is stationed right beside the Lord at Chidambaram. To depict this, the pallavi has <i>Siva kAma vallISam</i> , showing how close Nataraja and Shivakamavalli are.

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