

NAVA-VIDHA BHAKTI THROUGH THE COMPOSITIONS OF
MUTHUSWAMY DEEKSHITAR

BY- Carthik Shankar

6-1-276, 302, Bangari Block

Conjeevaram House, Padmarao Nagar

Secunderabad . 500025

Ph- +91 9949221027

Email- carthikshankar19977@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

श्रवणं कीर्तनं विष्णोः स्मरणं पादसेवनम् ।

अर्चनं वन्दनं दास्यं सख्यमात्मनिवेदनम् ॥

Shravanam keertanam vishnoh smaranam paadasevanam|

Archanam vandanam daasyam sakhyam aatmanivedanam||'

-7.5.23- Srimad Bhagavatam

'Listening, singing, Thinking/ visualizing the lord, dwelling upon the divine feet, offering worship and prayers, humbly serving him, being a friend and to surrender one's soul are the nine primary ways of expressing Bhakti unto the Supreme.'

This sloka told by Bhakta Prahalada, appearing in Srimad Bhagavatam lists the nine primary ways of Bhakti (devotion) – NAVA VIDHA BHAKTI that can be expressed by a devotee unto the Supreme.

These nine ways of Bhakti have been practiced, experienced and documented by various devotees, poets and scholars of the past, of which the contribution of the Vaggeyakaras of the world of Carnatic Music is invaluable. PurandaraDasa , Annamacharya, Bhadrachala Ramadasu, Maharaja Swati Tirunal followed by the famed Trinity namely; Shyama Sastri, Saint Tyagaraja and Muthuswamy Deekshitar have contributed to the corpus of Nava Vidha Bhakti in their own ways.

While approaching Nava Vidha Bhakti through the lens of Carnatic Music, it is usually Saint Tyagaraja or Maharaja Swati Tirunal's compositions that are listed and/or rendered.

AIM: This article aims looking at Nava Vidha Bhakti through the compositions of Muthuswamy Deekshitar and slokas from Srimad Bhagavatam.

KEYWORDS: Muthuswamy Deekshitar, Nava-Vidha Bhakti, Srimad Bhagavatam, Carnatic Music, Bhakti literature, Sahitya analysis

INTRODUCTION

‘Surrender the mind in devotion to the Lord, He will purify it and return it to you’. - Aurobindo.

As a part of the conversation between Prahlada and his father Hiranyakashipu, a very well-known sloka appears in Srimad Bhagavatam, which has been the primary source of inspiration to learn and write on this topic.

‘प्रह्लाद उवाच :

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अर्चनं वन्दनं दास्यं सख्यमात्मनिवेदनम् ॥

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In the Carnatic Music context, many Vaggeyakaras' compositions are identified with each form of Bhakti (devotion). It is usually Saint Tyagaraja, Purandaradasa and Maharaja Swati Tirunal (A set called Nava-vidha Bhakti kritis is attributed to him) who are credited with composing for all forms of Bhakti as expressed by Prahlada in Srimad Bhagavatam.

Muthuswamy Deekshitar , an eighteenth century Vaggeyakara and the youngest of the famed Carnatic Music Trinity cannot be overlooked upon when we talk about Bhakti and its forms. His compositions, give us a whole new perspective on Nava-vidha Bhakti. .

As this work is inspired by a sloka from Srimad Bhagavatam, a few slokas from Srimad Bhagavatam (and related literature) has been included to illustrate each type of Bhakti.

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. Shravanam- Listening to the names of the Lord

Out of the wealth of compositions Muthuswamy Deekshitar has authored, the composition in raga Anandabhairavi- 'Anandeshwarena samrakshitoham' talks about the importance of listening.

Unlike the compositions of other Vaggeyakaras whose compositions are usually attributed to Nava-vidha bhakti, Deekshitar gives a whole new dimension to these forms of devotion.

In this composition in AnandaBhairavi Raga, composed on Anandeshwara-one of the Panchalingams enshrined in the Tiruvarur temple complex, the importance of Shravana (listening) is brought out in the madhyamakala of the Charanam as:

‘श्रवण मनन निदिध्यासन समाधि-निष्ठापरोक्षानुभव स्व-मात्रावशेषित’

ShravaNa manana nididhyAsana samAdhi nishThA-aparOksha-anubhava sva-mAtra-avaSEshita

In Advaita-Vedanta, the 4-fold process of Shravana(listening), Manana(contemplating), Nididhyasana(meditation) and Samadhi(realization) is mentioned which is essential for complete Awakening and Realization.

Shravana, on surface level can be translated to listening. But it is not mere listening.

Deekshitar uplifts the process of listening to Vedantic value. Here, it is not just listening to various names/attributes of the Lord; but the first, important step to finding and realizing the Brahman within.

The Guru plays an extremely important role in Shravana. The instrument of Shravana is the Guru. Amongst all relationships, the one between the Guru and shisya is the most intimate, special, and pure because it is related to that part of your existence that is Truth itself. The words of Truth that pour out from the Guru create a shift in the inner space of one's beingness. One will begin to experience these shifts and immediately recognize the Truth that is taught by Guru. By listening to the Truth, one will immediately know and the process of realization begins.

Sloka(s) from Srimad Bhagavatam illustrating Shravana Bhakti:

श्वविड्वराहोष्ट्रखरैः संस्तुतः पुरुषः पशुः । न यत्कर्णपथोपेतो जातु नाम गदाग्रजः ॥

Shwavidvaraahoshtrakharaih sanstutah purushah pashuh

Na yatkarnapathopeto jaatu naama gadaagrajah [2.3.19]

Man is considered better than the dog, the cat, the pig, the camel and the donkey. But one into whose ears the name of Lord Vishnu has not entered is no better than an animal.

2. Keertanam- Singing the praises of the Lord

Keertana also referred to as nama-sankeertana sometimes, refers to repeated chanting, singing of the lord's names and his attributes.

Two perspectives on this concept can be found in the compositions of Muthuswamy Deekshitar.

- Muthuswamy Deekshitar seems to have used the phrase “भजरे / भजेऽहं” (*Bhajare/ Bhajeham*) extensively in many of his compositions.

This is the first major way Deekshitar refers to Keertanam in his compositions. He (in) directly asks us to sing the glory of the divine.

The mind (Manas) and/or the intellect (Chitta) is addressed to sing the glory of the divine and stop getting engaged in worldly pleasures.

There are many compositions that can be seen in this light. Here are some of them from the Sangita Sampradaya Pradarshini:

- Bhajare Re Chiita Balambikam- Kalyani
- Aryam Abhayambam Bhajare- Bhairavi
- Vatapi Ganapatim Bhajeham- Hamsadwani¹

¹ More compositions illustrating keertanam

- Kamalambam Bhajare- Kalyani
- Tyagarajam Bhajare- Yadukula Kamboji
- Tyagarajam Bhajeham- Nilambari
- Hiranmayeem Laksmeem- Lalita
- Balasubramanyam Bhajeham- Surati
- Bhaktavalsalam abhishekavalli yutam bhajeham nityam- Vamsavati
- Himachala Kumarim bhaje- JhankaaraBhramari
- Bhaktavalsalam abhishekavalli yutam bhajeham nityam- Vamsavati
- Himachala Kumarim bhaje- JhankaaraBhramari
- Kalabhairavam Bhajeham- Bhairavam

- The importance of Namasankeertana has been highlighted by Muthuswamy Deekshitar in the Saveri raga masterpiece ‘Sri Rajagopala’ on the presiding deity of Mannargudi-Rajagopala Swamy.

A beautiful phrase can be found in the Charanam

‘तारक दिव्य नाम पारायण कृत नारदादि नुत

tAraka divya nAma pArAyaNa kRta-nArada-Adi nuta’

The one praised by Narada and others who chant your divine names which enable crossing the ocean of Worldly Existence.

- Muthuswamy Deekshitar, in ‘Sri Raamam’ a composition in NarayanaGowla Raga says-

‘रामायण पारायण मुदित नारायणम्

rAmAyaNa-pArAyaNa mudita nArAyaNam’

The supreme lord Narayana, is delighted in the chanting of the Ramayana.

Sloka(s) from Srimad Bhagavatam illustrating Keertana Bhakti:

‘स वाग्विसर्गो जनताघविप्लवो यस्मिन् प्रतिश्लोकमबद्धवत्यपि।

नामान्यनन्तस्य यशोऽङ्कितानि यच्छृण्वन्ति गायन्ति गृणन्ति सन्तः॥

Sa vaagvisargo janataaghaviplavo

Yasmin pratishlokamabaddhavatyapi

Naamaanyanantasya yashonkitaani ya-

chchhrinwanti gaayanti grinanti santah [12.12.51]’

Words or speech, though not properly crafted or not in accordance with the rules of poetry, are nevertheless heard, sung and chanted by the saints and absolve men of all their sins if such words contain the names of the Lord bearing the stamp of

His glory.

3. Smaranam- Constant Contemplation

जननात्कमलालये दर्शनादभ्रसादसि ॥
काश्यन्तु मरणान्मुक्तिः स्मरणादरुणाचले ॥

(Sloka from Arunaachala maahaatmyam, Skaanda Purana)

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.

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)’ in Saranga Raga, Rupaka Tala.

Two phrases in this composition bring out the importance of Smaranam (Contemplating on the divine)

- The composition begins with the phrase-‘अरुणाचल नाथं स्मरामि अनिशं Arunachalanatham Smarami anisham’ where Deekshitar says that he constantly thinks/contemplates on the Lord of Arunachala, thereby indulging us also in divine thoughts.

- The phrase ‘स्मरणात् कैवल्य प्रद चरणारविन्दं smaraNAAt kaivalya prada caraNa-aravindaM’ in the anupallavi speaks of what one attains if he/she contemplates on Arunachala. Deekshitar says that the lotus-feet of the lord are capable of granting us liberation, just by contemplation/ thinking of them. Such is the power of Tiruvannamalai.

There are many more compositions of Muthuswamy Deekshitar where he says that he contemplates on the deity. Chintaya Makanda (Bhairavi,Rupakam) and Chintaya Mahalingamrtim(Paraju,Adi) are such examples.

Sloka(s) from Srimad Bhagavatam Illustrating Smarana Bhakti:

न यद्वचश्चित्रपदं हरेर्यशो जगत्पवित्रं प्रगृणीत कर्हिचित्।

तद्ध्वाङ्गतीर्थं न तु हंससेवितं यत्राच्युतस्तत्र हि साधवोऽमलाः

Na yadvachashchitrapadam hareryasho jagatpavitram pragrineeta karhichit

Taddhwaangshateertham na tu hamsasevitam yatraachyutastatra hi saadhavo'malaah

[12.12.50]

Words or speech, containing picturesque expressions, but which do not eulogize the Lord's deeds and glory which purify the whole world, are considered only as 'kakatirtha' infested by crows and not as 'manasarovar' which is populated by swans. Those of pure mind are present only where Achyuta is praised.

4. Pada Sevanam- Serving the feet of the Lord

Serving the lotus-like feet of the divine, to constantly meditate upon it and to be associated with it is considered to be of great value and has been illustrated by Muthuswamy Deekshitar in two compositions majorly.

The eighth vibhakti kriti (Sambodhana vibhakti) of the *Guruguha Vibhakti kritis- Sri Guruguhmurte* in Udayaravichandrika raga features a unique phrase in the charanam:

‘आरक्त श्वेत मिश्र चरण प्रवृत्ते

Arakta SvEta miSra charaNa pravRttE’

Salutations to the one (Guru) whose feet have the tendency to be red, white and their combination!

This phrase is important for many reasons.

Muthuswamy Deekshitar, here talks of the glory of the holy feet of the Guru- the dispeller of darkness (ignorance) and the guidance to light (knowledge). This is an extremely important element of Srividya Upanasa, which he practiced.

Deekshitar speaks of the role, qualities and importance of a competent Guru to guide aspirants in the right path to attain the divine in his Guruguha Vibhakti Kritis.

The Guru is seen no different from the Godhead. His feet are meditated to be in White and Red color on the Sahasrara Chakra of the aspirant.

Another composition where Deekshitar conveys his salutations to the divine feet is ‘*Kumara Swaminam*’ in raga Asaveri.

कुमार स्वामिनं गुरु गुहं

नमामि पद सरोरुहं अहं

kumAra svAminaM guru guhaM

namAmi pada sarOruhaM ahaM

‘I bow to the youthful Lord Subrahmanya who is verily Guruguha, the one with lotus-like feet!’ says Muthuswamy Deekshitar in this composition.

Sloka(s) from Srimad Bhagavatam illustrating Pada Sevana-Bhakti:

सकृन्मनः कृष्णपदारविन्दयोर्निवेशितं तद्गुणरागि यैरिह ।
न ते यमं पाशभृतश्च तद्भटान् स्वप्नेऽपि पश्यन्ति हि चीर्णनिष्कृताः ॥

*Sakrinmanah krishnapadaaravindayo-
rniveshitam tadgunaraagi yairiha*

Na te yamam paashabhritashcha tadbhataan

Swapne'pi pashyanti hi cheernanishkritaah [6.1.19]

*Once the devotees' minds, captivated by the good qualities of the Lord, dwell on His lotus-
feet, all their sins are absolved and they will not see, even in a dream, Yama and his
lieutenants armed with roaps in their hands.*

5. Archanam- Ritualistic worship/ puja

Archanam refers to ritualistic worshipping the divine usually comprising of

- Pancha upacharas (5 offerings namely: Gandha-sandalwood paste, Pushpa-fragrant flowers, Dhupa-incense smoke, Deepa- Light, Nievdyana/Naivedya- Food offerings),
- shodasa upacharas (16 offerings namely Aavahana- Inviting the deity, Aasana-giving seat, Padya- washing of feet, Arghya- washing of hands, Aachamana-

washing mouth, Snaana- bathing with various fragrant waters and juices, vastra-clothing, aabharna-offering accessories and jewelry, Gandha- perfumes/scents and sandalwood paste/vermillion(kumkuma), Pushpa- fragrant flower offerings, floral garlands and arrangements, Dhupa- incense smoke, Deepa-Light, Nivedya- Food offerings, followed by tamboola, Karpura- Camphor light and finally, Pradakshina namaskara- circumbulation and salutations to the divine!

- ▬ Or Chatu-shashti upacharas (a special form of worship that employs 64 offerings to the divine, *Ref- Lalita Sahasranama-namanali-Chatu-shasti-upachara-dhya*

Muthuswamy Deekshitar, in 3 of his compositions throws light on Archana Bhakti, each unique in their own way, which can be understood through the context of the deity being addressed and the rituals followed in that particular place.

In ‘*Mahaganapatim Vande*’ (Todi, Rupakam) where Lord Ganesha is being addressed, Deekshitar lists out the neivedya offerings that are dear to the lord in the madhyamakaala of the charanam as:

‘कपित्थाम्न पनस जम्बू

कदली फल भक्षितम्

kapittha-Amra panasa jambU -

kadali phala bhakshitam’

(*Salutations to Lord Mahaganapati who eats wood-apple, mango, jack-fruit, Jamun and banana fruits.*)

In the composition ‘*DandaayudhaPaanim*’ (AanandaBhairavi, Rupakam) Deekshitar mentions about the pancha-upacharas/pancha puja (ref above) form of worship.

(This composition addresses Lord Subramanya enshrined in Pazhani on top of a hill as Dandaayudhapaani. The shrine is believed to be extremely powerful and houses lots of esoteric secrets in it. Japa/repeated chanting of the lord’s names envisaged by seers/Rishis is considered as one of the very effective ways of attaining the divine’s grace. This form of Japa sadhana finds lots of importance in Pazhani.

Pancha puja as maansa/antar puja is commonly done as a part of the nyasas while performing Japas. Muthuswamy Deekshitar has very appropriately included the concept of pancha puja, an extremely important part of performing japa while composing at a shrine that lays emphasis on that form of worship.)

The charanam of the composition houses the verses:

‘पृथिव्यात्मक गन्धं

गगनात्मक सुम गन्धं

वायु-मय धूप गन्धं

वह्नि-मय दीप बृन्दं

अमृतात्मक रस बृन्दं

pRthivi-Atmaka gandhaM

gagana-Atmaka suma gandhaM

vAyu-maya dhUpa gandhaM

vahni-maya dIpa bRndaM

amRta-Atmaka rasa bRndaM’

(Sing the praises of the one offered perfumed flowers representing the sky, the one who is presented aromatic incense representing the wind, the one worshipped with lamps representing fire, the one who is offered a collection of foods representing ambrosia)

In ‘Sri Mangalambikam’ (Ghanta. Jhumpa) paraphernalia used in worshipping/appeasing the Goddess is mentioned by Deekshitar. The charanam of the composition contain the following verses:

‘कनक कलश सुशङ्ख घण्टादि

पूजोपकरणां

kanaka kalaSa su-Sankha ghaNTA-Adi -

pUjA-upakaraNAM’

(I meditate upon her who has accessories for worship such as a golden pitcher, a beautiful conch and a bell)

‘Aryaam Abhayaambaam ’(Bhairavi,Ata) is a composition where Deekshitar throws light on how can one ritually worship the Goddess when he/she visits a temple.

The Charanam of the composition is filled with details from this perspective.

‘नन्दन वनोत्पादन पुष्प मालिकां

वन्दनालयादि प्रस्थापन दिव्य-

चन्दन घर्षण स्थल शुद्धि करण

वन्दन स्तोत्रादि पठन भक्त सेवानां

nandana vana-utpAdana pushpa mAlikAM

vandana-Alaya-Adi prasthApana divya-

candana gharshaNa sthala Suddhi karaNa-

vandana stOtra-Adi paThana bhakta sEvAnAM’

[The one accepting the services (sEvana) of the devotees (bhakta), such as flower garlands made from fresh garden blooms (pushpa mAlikAM) prostrations(vandana), visiting temples (Alaya-Adi prasthApana), grinding divine sandal paste (divya-candana gharshaNa) and cleaning the ground (sthala Suddhi karaNa) (of the temples etc.), adoration (vandana), reading of works of praise (stOtra-Adi paThana)]

Although the three compositions mentioned above can be seen as the main sources to learn Archana Bhakti from the eyes of Muthuswamy Deekshitar, there are many more kirtanas where glimpses of Archana Bhakti can be observed. He documents special flowers, puja procedures, temple festivals in many more compositions.

Here is one such example- '*Sri Matrubhutam*' (Kannada,Misra Eka)

The phrase 'सुवासित नव जवन्ति पुष्प विकास प्रिय हृदयं -suvAsita nava javanti pushpa-vikAsa priya hRdayaM' (the one whose heart is pleased with the blossoming of Javanti flowers which are fragrant and fresh) which appears in the madhyamakala of the charanam gives an account of the speciality of the Javanthi/ Chrysanthemum flowers that are used in the worship of Matrubhuteshwara in Tiruchirapalli (Trichy).

Sloka(s) from Srimad Bhagavatam illustrating Archana Bhakti:

King Prithu can be considered as the epitome of Archana Bhakti in Srimad Bhagavatam, who appeased Lord Vishnu with the selfless vedic sacrifices he performed so much so that the Lord presented himself before the king. [4.20]

विख्यातः पृथुरिति तापसोपदिष्टैः

सूताद्यैः परिणुतभाविभूरिवीर्यः ।

वेनात्या कबलितसम्पदं धरित्री-

माक्रान्तां निजधनुषा समामकार्षीः ॥५॥

vikhyaataH pRithuriti taapasOpadiShTaiH

suutaadyaiH pariNutabhaavibhuuriviiRYaH |

venaartyaa kabalitasampadaM dharitriimaakraantaam

nijadhanuShaa samaamakaarShiiH || 5 ||

This was the famous incarnation of Thee as Prithu, the sages declared thus. The minstrels and others sang in praise of Thy future achievements. . Due to Vena's evil deeds, The Earth who had withdrawn all her resources into her interior and would not bring it forth was attacked by Thy bow and arrow, and was made to yeild back the resources.ng. ||5||

Srimad Narayaneeyam- 18-5

6. Vandanam- Prostrating before the Supreme

Supreme ‘reverence’ or ‘prayer’ to the lord is the sixth form of devotion. In this form of devotion a devotee begins to see his favorite form of the Lord everywhere and in all beings and objects. The significance of this form of devotion is that it is not just for humans to practice, but for every being that wants to attain the grace of the Supreme may practice this form of devotion to attain the Lord.

In Muthuswamy Deekshitar’s compositions, ‘*Suryamurte*’ (Saurashram,Dhruvam) finds a special place and the mood Deekshitar sets here is that of Vandanam. Here, Muthuswamy Deekshitar records his humble salutations to the Sun God by employing the word ‘*namostute*’. The melodic arrangement of this word is at the *mantra sthaayi*, exactly conveying the humility and respect Muthuswamy Deekshitar approaches the Sun God with and the position of the feet of the lord to which Deekshitar pays his humble respects through this composition.

Out of many compositions authored by Muthuswamy Deekshitar, a bunch of them contain the phrase ‘Namaste Namaste’.

A classic example of employing ‘Namaste Namaste’ is ‘*Sri Subramanyaya Namaste Namaste*’ (Kambhoji, Rupaka).

‘श्री सुब्रह्मण्याय नमस्ते नमस्ते

मनसिज कोटि कोटि लावण्याय दीन शरण्याय

SrI subrahmaNyAya namastE namastE

manasija kOTi kOTi lAvaNyAya dIna SaraNyAya’

Salutations again and again to Subrahmanya, the one who is handsome as crores and crores of Manmatha, the refuge of the poor and miserable.

‘Tyagarajaya Namaste Namaste’ (Begada, Rupakam), ‘KamalAmbikAyai kanakAMSukAyai karpUra vITikAyai Namaste Namaste’ (Kambhoji, Ata), ‘Ishanadi Shivaakaramanche’ (Sahana, Rupaka), ‘Siddhishwaraya Namaste’ (Neelambari, Misra Eka) are some more illustrations.

Sloka(s) from Srimad Bhagavatam illustrating Vandanam Bhakti:

खं वायुमग्निं सलिलं महीं च ज्योतीषि सत्त्वानि दिशो द्रुमादीन्।

सरित्समुद्रांश्च हरेः शरीरं यत्किंच भूतं प्रणमेदनन्यः ॥

Kham vaayumagnim salilam maheem cha

Jyoteemshi sattwaani disho drumaadeen

Saritsamudraamshcha hareh shareeram

Yatkincha bhootam pranamedananyah [11.2.41]

Sky, air, fire, water, earth, stars, all living beings, all quarters, trees, rivers, oceans and whatever else made of the five elements are the body of Hari. Therefore the devotee should pay obeisance to all these.

7. Daasyam

Daasyam, the seventh form of devotion is where the devotee sees himself as not just the ‘servant’ of the Lord but also the servant of the Lord’s devotees, with no sense of inferiority. Daasyam refers to a heartfelt yearning to be of personal service to the

Supreme. It is the ultimate expression of humility, yet it is bold in its aspiration to such a lofty position.

‘Sri Guruguhasya Dasoham’, the sixth of Guruguha Vibhakti kritis set in sixth vibhakti, Purvi Raga, Misra Eka taala is a classic example of Daasya Bhakti through the eyes of Muthuswamy Deekshitar.

‘श्री गुरु गुहस्य दासोऽहं

नो चेत् चिद्गुरु गुह एवाहम्

SrI guru guhasya dAsO(a)haM

nO cEt cidguru guha EvAham’

I am the servant of Guruguha. Otherwise, I am myself Guruguha, the embodiment of consciousness.

Here Muthuswamy Deekshitar declares himself to be the servant of his Guru.

Sloka(s) from Srimad Bhagavatam illustrating Daasya Bhakti:

निरपेक्षं मुनिं शान्तं निर्वैरं समदर्शनं ।

अनुव्रजाम्यहं नित्यं पूयेयेत्यङ्घ्रिरेणुभिः ॥

Nirapeksham munim shaantam nirvairam samadarshanam

Anuvrajaamyaham nityam pooyeyetyanghrirenubhih [11.14.16]

My devotees who do not want anything, who have control over their speech, who are tranquil and at peace, who have no enemies and who see the same divinity in all living beings – them I follow wherever they go in the fond hope that I may be purified by the dust of their feet.

8. Sakhyam- Friendship

Sakhya is the form of Bhakti where the devotee considers the Lord to be his/her friend (sakhaa/ sakhi).

An interesting relation between a devotee (who saw the Lord as his friend) and the Lord is that of Sundaramurthy Nayanar (one of the sixty four Nayanmars-Shaivite Saints). He considered Lord Tyagaraja (a form of Lord Shiva enshrined in Tiruvarur, Tamil Nadu) as his friend.

The Shaivite saint Sundaramurthy Nayanar marries Paravai Nachiar and later on Sangili Nachiar, as he is destined to. After his sojourn in Thiruvottiyur, he leaves for Thiruvarur, to worship at the temple there. His first wife Paravai resides in Thiruvarur. News of her husband's marriage has already reached her, and so she refuses to allow her husband into her house.

The saint asks Lord Siva to visit Paravai and convince her that all that has happened has been in accordance to his plans. Lord Siva walks to Paravai's house, and explains to her, and Paravai, realising her husband's greatness, allows him into the house.

The Lord's feet, which great seers and sages worship, walked the streets of Thiruvarur, to take a message from one mortal to another mortal. He thought nothing of placing His lotus like feet on the streets of Thiruvarur to carry a message for his friend-devotee, Sundaramurthy Nayanar.

'Sundaramurtim' (Takka, Rupakam) is a composition of Muthuswamy Deekshitar addressing Sundaramurthy Nayanar.

‘सुन्दर मूर्ति आश्रयामि

शिव भूसुर कुलाब्धि चन्द्रं करुणा सान्द्रम्

sundara mUrtiM ASrayAmi

Siva bhU-sura kulAbdhi candraM

karuNA sAndram'

I seek refuge in Sundaramurti Nayanar, the moon rising from the ocean of community of

Shivacharyas, the intensely compassionate one.

Arjuna is another classic example of a devotee who achieved perfection through friendship with the lord. When Lord Krishna reveals his magnificent universal form to his friend Arjuna, he was aghast, and stammered out an apology:

‘सखेति मत्वा प्रसभं यदुक्तं

हे कृष्ण हे यादव हे सखेति।

अजानता महिमानं तवेदं

मया प्रमादात्प्रणयेन वापि।।11.41।।

sakheti matvaa prasabham yad uktam

he krishna he yaadava he sakheti |

ajaanata mahimaanam tavedam

mayaa pramaadat pranayena vaapi ||’

I have in the past addressed you as ‘Krishna,’ ‘Yadava,’ ‘my friend,’ without knowing your glories. Please forgive whatever I may have done in madness or in love.

(Bhagavad Gita. Chapter 11.41)

Muthuswamy Deekshitar captures this friendly relationship between Arjuna and Lord Krishna in ‘Sri Krishnam Bhajare’ (Rupavati, Rupaka).

The madhyamakala in this composition features the phrase:

‘अर्जुन प्रेमास्पदं

arjuna prEmAspadaM’

(Oh mind! Worship Sri Krishna, The object of Arjuna’s affection!)

Sloka(s) from Srimad Bhagavatam illustrating Sakhya-Bhakti:

ननु ब्रह्मन् भगवतः सखा साक्षाच्छ्रियः पतिः ।

ब्रह्मण्यश्च शरण्यश्च भगवान् सात्वतर्षभः ॥ ९ ॥

nanu brahman bhagavataḥ

sakhā sākṣāc chriyaḥ patih
brahmaṇyaś ca śaraṇyaś ca
bhagavān sātvarāṣabhah ||

[Sudama's wife said to Sudama:] O brāhmaṇa, isn't it true that the husband of the goddess of fortune is the personal friend of yours? The Supreme Lord Krishna is compassionate to brāhmaṇas and always willing to grant them shelter.

9. Aatma Nivedanam- Complete surrender

Aatmanivedanam, the ninth and last form of devotion means 'complete surrender' to the will of the Supreme, with no traces of ego whatsoever left in the devotee's heart. Completely filled with devotion to God, the devotee gains the knowledge of his true self in this form of devotion where the devotee and the lord become one.

As Lord Krishna says in Bhagavat Gita:

‘अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।
तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥ 22॥
Ananyas-chintayanto mam ye janah paryupasate |
tesham nityabhiyuktanam yoga-kshemam vahamyaham||’

He, who constantly remembers me and worships me at all times, is protected and his welfare is taken care of by Me at all times.

(Bhagavat Gita, Chapter 9.22)

Unlike other Vaggeyakaras, Muthuswamy Deekshitar's ideology of Aatma Nivedanam has been very different. We find him submitted at the feet of the Supreme, yearning for Videha Mukti/Kaivalya through his compositions. In 'GuruGuhaaya' (Sama, Adi), he says it's the Guru who has the capacity to bestow on a disciple, Videha Kaivalya in the phrase:

विकलेबर कैवल्य दानाय

vikaLEbara kaivalya dAnAya'
The bestower of Videha Kaivalya

In 'TyagarajeKrtyakrtyam' (Saranga, Jhumpa) he says,

‘त्यागराजे कृत्याकृत्यं अर्पयामि

विदेह कैवल्यं यामि

TyAgarAjE kRtyAkRtyaM arpayAmi
vidEha kaivalyaM yAmi'

*I submit unto Lord Tyagaraja, all my right and wrong actions. (Hence) I shall attain
(vidEha kaivalyam) liberation from bodily existence.*

In 'Ranganayakam' (Nayaki,Adi), we find

‘मामक विदेह मुक्ति साधनं

mAmaka vidEha mukti sAdhanam'

(I meditate upon the Lord of SriRangam, the means or instrument of my Videha Mukti)²

Sloka(s) from Srimad Bhagavatam illustrating Aatma Nivedana- Bhakti:

कायेन वाचा मनसेन्द्रियैर्वा बुद्ध्यात्मना वाऽनुसृतस्वभावात्।
करोति यद्यत् सकलं परस्मै नारायणायेति समर्पयेत्तत्॥

Kaayena vaachaa manasendriyairvaa
Budhyaatmanaa vaa'nusritaswabhaavaat
Karoti yat yad sakalam parasmai
Naaraayanaayeti samarpayettat [11.2.36]

*Whatever is done by the body, by words, by the mind, by the senses, by the intellect, by
the self or by innate nature – let everything be surrendered to Lord Narayana.*

CONCLUSION:

² Videha Mukti- A short note

“Question: What are the characteristics of the jivan-mukta (the liberated in life) and the videha-mukta (the liberated at death)?

Sri Ramana Maharshi: ‘I am not the body; I am Brahman which is manifest as the Self. In me who am the plenary [absolute] Reality, the world consisting of bodies etc, are mere appearance, like the blue of the sky’. He who has realized the truth thus is a jivan-mukta.

Yet so long as his mind has not been resolved, there may arise some misery for him because of relation to objects on account of prarabdha (karma which has begun to fructify and whose result is the present body) [ie. due to destiny], and as the movement of mind has not ceased there will not be also the experience of bliss.

The experience of Self is possible only for the mind that has become subtle and unmoving as a result of prolonged meditation. He who is thus endowed with a mind that has become subtle, and who has the experience of the Self is called a jivan-mukta. It is the state of jivan-mukti that is referred to as the attributeless Brahman and as the Turiya.

When even the subtle mind gets resolved, and experience of self-ceases, and when one is immersed in the ocean of bliss and has become one with it without any differentiated existence, one is called a videha-mukta. It is the state of videha-mukti that is referred to as the transcendent attributeless Brahman and as the transcendent Turiya. This is the final goal.

Because of the grades in misery and happiness, the released ones, the jivan-muktas and videha- muktas, may be spoken of as belonging to four categories — Brahmaavid, vara, variyan and varishtha. But these distinctions are from the standpoint of the others who look at them; in reality, however, there are no distinctions in release [liberation] gained through jnana [self-knowledge].”

An excerpt from ‘Vichaara Sangraham’ of Ramana Maharishi

[Type text]

Shaanta bhakti and Raaga bhakti are two predominant types of Bhakti Sage Narada states in his Bhakti Sutras as a part of refining a Bhakta (devotee) to attain the grace of the Supreme.

Saint Tyagaraja is the best example of Raaga bhakti while Muthuswamy Deekshitar is the best example of Shaanta bhakti.

Saint Tyagaraja in his composition '*SAntamu lEka*' ends it with 'upa' - upaSAntamu lEka. This upaSAnta can be understood as the ultimate tranquility that emanates when the bhakta - as jIva - has realised jIva's oneness with the paramAtma and he/she (jIva) ever feels the divine presence and all-pervasiveness and, therefore has no demands.

In order to appreciate Shaanta bhakti one needs to transcend human emotions. While a Raaga Bhakta's anguish and cry are easily relatable to general population, it requires a much more sophistication and poise to understand and appreciate a Shaanta Bhakta's outpourings - which are totally different, but both leading to same goal.

Therefore, Muthuswamy Deekshitar's compositions are no less outpourings than Tyagaraja's (or any other Vaggeyakaras'), in terms of Nava Vidha Bhakti. Aatma-nivedana is the ultimate goal to be attained.

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PICTURES

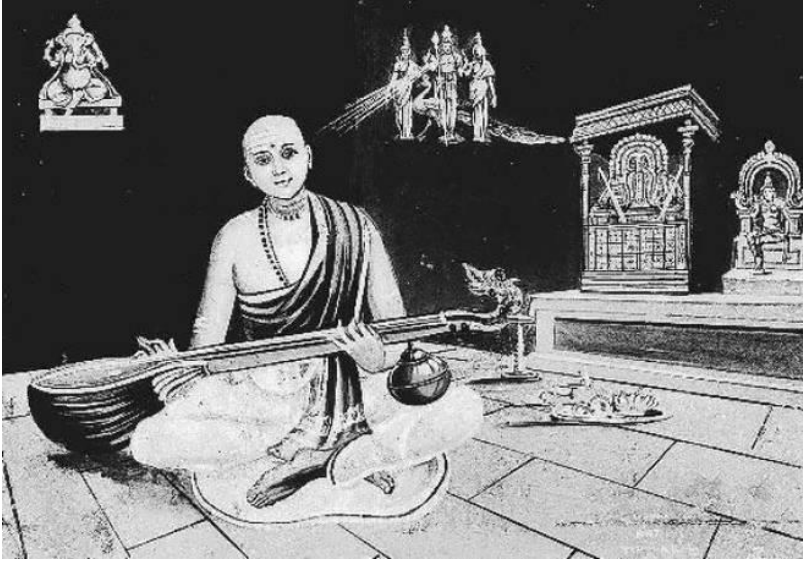


Figure 1- Muthuswamy Deekshitar