

Dikshitar's Individuality

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Carnatic music reached the peak of its classical perfection of the Kirtana form in the hands of the three master composers, Thyagaraja Swami, Muthuswami Dikshitar and Sama Sastri. Contemporaries as all the three were, having been born in the same sacred Tiruvarur and within a few years of each other, yet each of them built up the melodic mould, stamping his individuality upon both its form and content. If Thyagaraja's conceits of his Ishta Devata, Sri Ramachandra, achieved lyrical finish when encased in tunes irridiscent with sparkling Raga effects, if Sama Sastri's attunement with Goddess Kamakshi sought fresh measures (laya prastaras) for integrating the inner rhythm of his musical experience, Dikshitar's genius wove a rich fabric of resounding tapestry of varigated Ragas, dwelling vividly upon the Muse in an elaborate ritual of slow and deliberate invocation.

Dikshitar's art is certainly a sophisticated one in the sense that a conscious investment of intellectuality bears its distinct marks in his exposition of a Raga in all its completeness. His sonorous Sanskrit diction added often to the Swaraksharas skilfully synchronised with the Sahitya, preserves an uncloyingly long-drawn-out grandeur of sound and sentiment. Further, in the vast sweeping corridors of his melodic mansions, the imaginative mind, listening to the unbroken continuity of sound patterns, gets easily lost in the surfeit of unexplored musical prayogas.

Turning to his compositions, an initiated Rasika will find the way Dikshitar has set to music the sahitya and his employment of Raga-Sanchara (development of the Raga)

create for him an experience as of moving in a massive temple of architectural beauty with mounting piles of towers and an inner sanctuary dedicated to the Supreme Being. The fine attributes of the Deity of the place, the traditional lore surrounding the installation of the presiding God, the peculiarity, if any, of the sacred tank (Tirtha)—these and more of knowledge of subjects like Astrology, Mantra Sastra, Sthala Puranas, secure an abiding store-house of information in his masterpieces.

One of the peculiarities in his carefully worked-out edifice of a *kriti* is the happy blend of the techniques of both Southern and Northern Indian systems. His early familiarising with Hindusthani music through his preceptor, Sri Chidambaranatha Yogi, at Benares, provided him, perhaps, with a fruitful source of originality for his permissive innovations. Thus in the *Vilambita Laya* characterising his creations, you find in the *Charana* a quick pacing or *madhyama kala tempo* reminding one of the constructive variation for enhancing aesthetic enjoyment. The natural stimulus for his Raga development on the ALAP method of the Northern style with ensnaring *anuswara Gamakas*, can be traced to his having handled the VEENA with mastery. For he in fact does not fail to refer to himself as a VAINIKA-GAYAKA-GURU GUHA in his song in Bhairavai 'Bala Gopala'.

Another point for absorption to Rasikas is his literary skill in introducing the Raga name in such a manner that it hardly obtrudes but effectively forms part of the Sahitya. The singer has necessarily to pause in case he has to split the Samasam word in order to bring to the listener's knowledge the

name of the Raga. Thus for example in the Anupallavi of a Nava-varna Kirtana in Kambhoji, the words occur as SAKALA-SOWBHAGYA - DAYAKA MBHOJA-CHRANAYAI, which if split properly would release the words Ambhoja Charanayai (Lotus feet) of the Goddess. Again in the Bowli kriti, Sri Parvati-Parameshvrow, the words in Samasam CHIDBIMBOW-LILA VIGRAHOW bears when not split the name Bowli in the middle.

One other feature of his literary manipulation is the Yati Prasam such as what we notice in his Ananda Bhairavi kriti Thyagaraja-Yoga-Vaibhavam. In that particular piece, we have the employment of both Gopucha Yati and the Srotovaha Yati, which when sung only can bear us the finesse of this novel accomplishment. They respectively carry, in the order of contraction and of expansion, the words chosen to be amplified. Thus we have in the epithets AGHA-RAJA-YOGA-VAIBHAVAM, RAJA-YOGA -VAIBHAVAM, YOGA VAIBHAVAM, VAI-BHAVAM, VAM the former Yati displayed, while the latter gets expanded as, SAM-PRAKASAM, SWARUPA PRAKASAM, TATVA-SWARUPA-PRAKASAM, SAKALA-TATVA-SWARUPA-PRAKASAM, SIVA-SAKTYADI-SAKALA-TATVA-SWARUPA-PRAKASAM. No doubt unless rendered musically, much of the charm of the lilt and cadence will get lost in the dreary prosaic narration.

From extant scriptural texts and Strotra literature, Dikshitar has drawn many a significant expression to decorate his garlands of praises of the Goddesses. Thus the Lalita Sahasranamam of mellifluous phrases has yielded him words such as KARPURAVITIKAYAI in his Kambhoji song on Kamalambika, KADAMBARI PRIYAYAI in his Mohanam piece starting with the same words, and SHIPRA-PRASADINI in his Nilambari Kriti on the Goddess Nilayataakshi.

If as a traditionalist, Dikshitar has not swerved from the path chalked out by Venkata Makhi, he was not also like his predecessor averse to making successful experiments by introducing Bhavas from the Northern Indian style. He was able to prove thereby how the two systems are essentially one, though with only difference in presentation. His erudition was deep; his aesthetic perception was original in some ways; his Sahitya was intoned with dignity and delicacy; his mind dwelt on an altitude difficult for ordinary artists to approach; his prime object was to exhaust in his Kritis all the pilgrim spots of this vast Bharata Varsha from Kasi to Rameswaram.

His inimitable style of composition has become part and parcel of the great heritage of Carnatic music, handed down by Purandara Dasa and Kshetragna and enviably enhanced in its dimensions by Thyagaraja and Sama Sastri along with him. His familiarity with Telugu and Tamil enthused him to present a few songs and Varnams either in Telugu or in distinct Manipravala language. His adherence to the pure and pristine form of Ragas is itself a source of corrective study to many an aspirant-artist in learning music. Whenever doubts assail exponents of a Raga-prayoga of rare origin, Dikshitar's presentation of it is sought for clarification and edification.

Yagnavalkya of old assured Moksha or the liberation of the soul to the constant votary of music, and as a direct proof of it Dikshitar practised it as a Yoga and was determined to attain his main goal through his renderings. An Advaitin at heart, despite his offerings of worship to the Finite image of the All Powerful, he believed in the gradual process of evolution of spirituality. As an upasaka striving for the only aim of ANANDA or Bliss through the unbounded grace of the Mother, always he cherished the bold thought of viewing himself not as separate at all from the Paramatman, his self-assurance asserting in a song in the Poorvi Raga where he burst out; 'If I am not a servant of the Lord Guru Guha, I am Himself' (GURU-GUHASYA DASOHAM NO CHET GURU GUHA EVAHAM) ●