

Appreciating Carnatic Music
Dr. Lakshmi Sreeram
Indian Institute of Technology, Madras

Lecture – 50
Muthuswami Dikshitar –
The Sanskrit Scholar and the Advaitan

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Muthuswami dikshitar was a Sanskrit scholar. And he brought his scholarship to bear upon his compositions, as well. In many of his compositions, we can see that scholarship glistening, It is almost as if, his love for the language Sanskrit and how he marries that love for music. If you find emotional richness in Thyagaraja. We find this linguistic, incorporating the richness of Sanskrit language into musical compositions, we find this in Dikshitar.

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For instance, Dikshitar has composed many groups of what is called “Vibhakti Kritis”. Now vibhakti, is those of you are exposed to any bit of Sanskrit, vibkathi is how nouns, are declined in Sanskrit. This is very basic fundamental grammatical principal, a noun, can take on any case as sentences, various cases in the sentences.

For instance, If I say Rama comes, Rama is a doer, is a nominative case. So, he is the person who performs the action so Rama comes, if I say, I see Rama here, the Rama, the noun in the position of the object. This is now accusative case and so on.

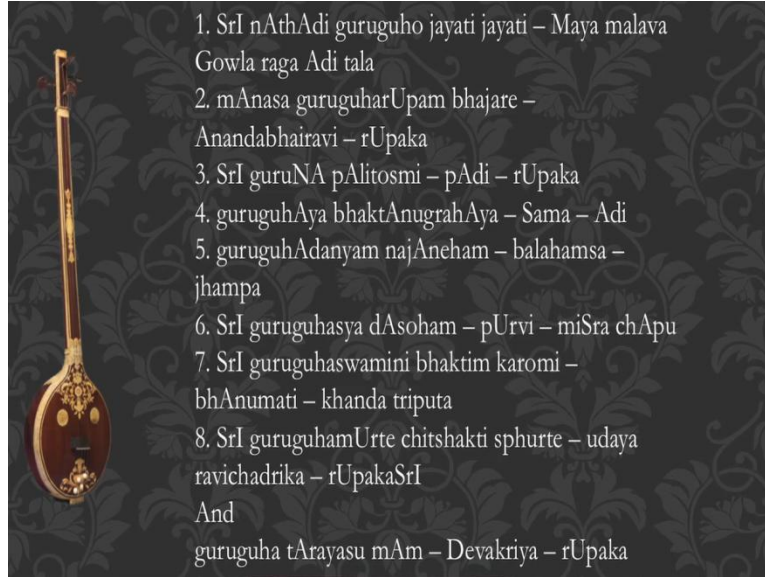
I could say for instance, this is Rama’s book, in which case this is, what is called genitive, it is Rama’s book. So, every noun, can taken on any of eight cases according to Sanskrit grammar. And Dikshitar as composed, many sets of compositions, in praise of various deities and he has composed them in all the Vibhaktis.

So, for instance, taking the god, lord Thyagaraja of Tiruvarur. We have the Thyagaraja Vibhakti kriti, he has sung one compositions, in nominative case and second in the accusative case and so on, till eight compositions.

Now, not only in praise of Thyagaraja, “Kamalaba Vibhakti” kriti what is called as “Kamalamba Navavarna” it is extremely famous set of kritis. We have Abhayamba kritis, Nilotpalamba kritis, Guruguha vibhakti kritis, Rama also, Sri Rama Vibhakti kritis we have.

So, this is something, he has obviously, he has taken great pleasure, in bringing his Sanskrit scholarship, is love for Sanskrit, into his compositional endeavors. So, if you take look at this set of compositions, these are the Guruguha Vibhakti kritis

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1. SrI nAthAdi guruguho jayati jayati – Maya malava
Gowla raga Adi tala
2. mAnasa guruguharUpam bhajare –
Anandabhairavi – rUpaka
3. SrI guruNA pAlitosmi – pAdi – rUpaka
4. guruguhAya bhaktAnugrahAya – Sama – Adi
5. guruguhAdanyam najAneham – balahamsa –
jhampa
6. SrI guruguhasya dAsoham – pUrvi – miSra chApu
7. SrI guruguhaswamini bhaktim karomi –
bhAnumati – khanda tripata
8. SrI guruguhamUrte chitshakti sphurte – udaya
ravichadrika – rUpakaSrI

And
guruguha tArayasu mAm – Devakriya – rUpaka

we can see there are eight kritis the first vibakthi “Sri nanthadi guruguho jayti jayati”. The second his “Manasa guruguharupam bhajare” this were the object it is the accusative. “Sri guruna palitosm”, this an instrumental case. “Guruguhaya bakhthanugrahaya” this is the fourth case. Then “Guruguhadanyam najaneham” this is in the fifth case. “Sri guruguhasya dasoham” this is the sixth case. “Sri guruguhaswamini” this is the seventh and finally we have “Sri guruguhamurte chitshakti sphurte” this is how these compositions have begun the set of Vibakthi kritis.

Now this the first composition in this group “Srinathadi guruguho jayati jayati” there is, much has been said about this composition it is believed to have been the first ever composition that Dikshitar composed, and it goes like this (Singing Starts: 05:16) (Singing Ends: 05:33)

So, this is in the ragam “Mayamalavagowla” which you all know, it is the first raga that the beginner start. And the aroha avaroha is incorporated into this composition right in the beginning it is like this. (Singing Starts: 05:54) (Singing Ends: 06:24)

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You have the first, second and the third speed, incorporated into the very first avarthana of the compositions. And textually also, there are many references to Advaita as we will see, Dikshitar was a Advaita. Advaita vedantha being one of the, philosophical, metaphysical stands. It is a spiritual path. Advaita vedantha is not just a metaphysical stand, it is also a spiritual path and Dikshitar was very much an Advaitan and in this composition, we have many reference to Advaita.

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We have references to “Manthara Sastra Thantra” and Srividya, worship also. To really appreciate, Dikshitar compositions in the fullness, one needs to have, a knowledge of all these esoteric disciplines. But, even without them just the sound of the composition themselves have a certain granduarer about it, can instill anon in the listener. Now Advaita, if we talk of Dikshitar composition, we have to mention Advaita.

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And Advaita, as I said it is a school of philosophy, of meta metaphysics, that was first propounded by “Adi Sankaracharya”. And more than anything, it is a spiritual path and many Hindus adhered to its tenets.

And its very complex metaphysics, and its very complex philosophy. But it's usually summarized in three lines “Brahma satyam”, “Jaganmithya”, “Jivobrahmaiva na parah”. That is, Brahman, there one ultimate, it is an unrelenting monism. Which says that, ultimate reality is one it is a single principle.

And all that, we see by experience, all these differences, all these experiences which is grounded on differentiating oneself from one self, this is unreal this is “Jaganmithya” the world is unreal. Brahman is true “Jaganmithya”. The world is unreal “Jivobrahmaiva” that is every individual soul is Brahman. So, that is also the purport, of the very famous Upanishad said “Tatvamase”. Brahman, is you and there is no difference.

So, it is a highly, highly complex. And its philosophical that has had many, let me have, many texts on many proponents of it. Many people have debated against and for it. It is a complex system. And in Dikshitar compositions, you have many of concepts and ideas that belong to the Vedic traditions, woven into the compositions themselves.

Now, if the world is unreal, and if that ultimate reality is a single difference less principle and differentiated principle and why is that we experience all this, Advaitic explanation for this is Maya.

So, it is Maya, a veil of ignorance, that covers the individual soul, which is why it sees, so many things different from it, and we experience the world. So, Maya again is an incredibly complex and interesting concept. And Dikshitar's compositions on this is perhaps, captures as best as it can be. The Maya is the veil of ignorance. But Maya is also the reason that we worship the lord, because the Maya is the reason for the lord also, even Eshwara is the creation of Maya.

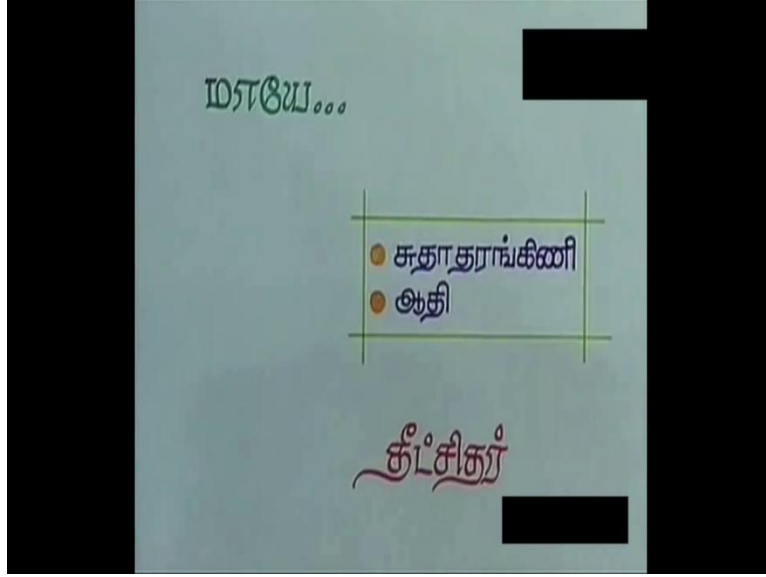
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So, in this composition “Mayetvam yahi” for this, Dikshitar first says “Mayetvam yahi” go away. And then he says “Mampahi”, he says “Mayetvam yahi mam badhitum kahi”, why do you disturb me, Maya you go away, why do you disturb me. Immediately, in anupallavi, he says “dhyaye dhyeye tvamehi mudam dehi mampahi”, but you are, what I have to mediate on. And now you come, give me joy and protect me. Even the goddess is Maya.

So, this kind of basic paradox, that lies in the heart of Advaita, which is captured in the concept of Maya, Dikshitar sings about it. I will just sing the first line of it, the rest of it you can hear it rendered on the violin (Singing Starts: 12:43) (Singing Ends: 13:17)

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So, we might say that, the complexity of the concept of Maya, the intrinsic paradox of Advaita vendantha, is captured magnificent in the very small composition. Maya is the reason for the ignorance or she has to go away for knowledge to arise, which knowledge is liberation according

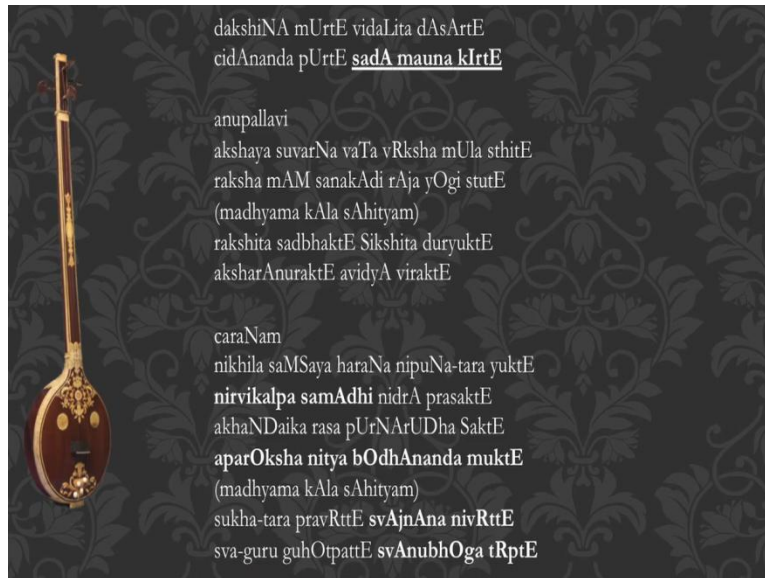
to Advaita vedantha. And yet, it is she who is worshipped, and she who has to be mediated upon, and she is the giver of boons.

And it is only in the Jagath, which is mithya. That is which is illusory, the world which is illusory, only in this world, is the worshipped and the worshipper real. In the realm of Brahman, ultimate reality that a difference less principle. There is nothing apart from it, as Dikshitar, again says in another composition of his “Nirvishesha chaitanya roopini”, it is the principle, ultimate principle of the sheer difference less consciousness, what we also call Sachidanandha.

In Advaita vaidanta, a seeker of Brahman, a seeker after liberation, seeks knowledge and he must seek out a guru. For that, a teacher who can impart, that knowledge to him, but yet this knowledge is not something, just that can be imparted. How can you talk about Brahman, as a “Keno Upanishads” says, one of the ancient Upanishads, it says that principal, Brahman whence words written, words cannot reach it, the mind cannot reach it, cannot attain them? The words or the mind cannot attain Brahman.

So, we have the concept of Dakshinamurthy, the deity who is the guru, who imparts Advaitic learning. And he imparts through silence “Mounam Vyakyanam” as it is called.

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dakshiNA mUrtE vidaLita dAsArtE
cidAnanda pUrtE sadA mauna kIrtE

anupallavi
akshaya suvarNa vaTa vRksha mUla sthitE
raksha mAM sanakAdi rAja yOgi stutE
(madhyama kAla sAhityam)
rakshita sadbhaktE Sikshita duryuktE
aksharAnuraktE avidyA viraktE

caraNam
nikhila saMSaya haraNa nipuNa-tara yuktE
nirvikalpa samAdhi nidrA prasaktE
akhaNdaika rasa pUrNArUDha SaktE
aparOksha nitya bOdhAnanda muktE
(madhyama kAla sAhityam)
sukha-tara pravRttE svAjnAna nivRttE
sva-guru guhOtpattE svAnubhOga tRptE

And this is Dakshinamurthy, Dikshitar has composed a grand composition on Dakshinamurthy. In the Sankarabaranam in the pallavi itself as you can see “dakshina murte vidalita dasarte cidananda purte sads mouna kirte, he faints for his mouna vyakyanam” for his teaching through silence.

The charanam, has many concepts connected with the Advaita Vedanta “nikila samsaya harana nipunatara yukte nirvikalpa Samadhi”, this is the state of Brahma realization, where you realize Brahman “Nirvikalpa” there is no “Vikalpa” is distortion anything. For instance, “Suvikalpa” that is our all our experiences are “Survikalpa”, that if you see anything the consciousness gets distorted. It gets element, that is “Survi kalpa nirvi kalpa samadhi” is a state of liberation “Nirvi kalpa samadha” that is one thing.

“Aparoksha nitya bodhanandha mukthe” again that is, a profound Advaitic concept, that is knowledge of Brahman is aparoksha, it is without any mediation “svajnana nivritte svanubhogu trpte”, that is you revel in your own or enjoy in yourself. Because the Brahman is supposed to be the nature of “Sachitananda” joy is the essence of Brahman. So, these extremely exoteric concept, they are all woven very easily into a composition like this. That is Dikshitar for you.

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