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Srinivasa Bala Bharati

# MUTTUSWAMY DEEKSHITAR

*English Translation*

Chintagunta Subba Rao



**Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams,  
Tirupati**

Srinivasa Bala Bharati - 140

(Children Series)

# MUTTUSWAMY DEEKSHITAR

*Telugu Version*

**Dr. R.A. Padmanabha Rao**

*English Translation*

**Chintagunta Subba Rao**



**Published by  
Executive Officer  
Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, Tirupati.  
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**Srinivasa Balabharati - 140**  
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*Telugu Version*

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*Editor-in-Chief*

**Prof. Ravva Sri Hari**

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## FOREWORD

If a beautiful garden is to be raised, one needs to take proper care of tender flower plants. In the same way in order to create a good society, great care needs to be taken of young children who are going to be future citizens of India. All their intellectual attainments will be futile if they fail to learn of their culture and its greatness. They need to be told of great men and women of this country so that they are inspired by their ideals. The essentials of our culture should be given to them in the form of simple and charming stories. They will cherish these ideals and be guided by them. They will promote good and they will love the society they live in. They make their families proud and bring great prestige to their country when they grow up into good citizens.

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams have brought out these booklets for children in Telugu under Srinivasa Bala Bharati Series. Although meant for children, they are useful to the elderly too. They have found place in the book shelves of every family. The stories of legendary men and women are narrated in a simple way. We hope that more and more children will read them and profit by them.

I congratulate Dr. R. Sri Hari, Editor-in-Chief, TTD for his efforts in bringing out the English translations of SRINIVASABALA BHARATI SERIES so well. We have received co-operation of many learned men and women in our efforts to popularize this series. I am thankful to them.

In the Service of the Lord



**Executive Officer,**

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams.  
Tirupati.

## **FOREWORD**

Today's children are tomorrow's citizens. They need apt acquaintance with the life-histories of celebrated persons at tender so that they get opportunity to lead their lives in an exemplary way. They will come to know that great things such as Indian culture, basic tenets of life and moral teachings are abundantly available in the life-experiences of great men. It is observed that there is no scope to teach such subjects in school curriculum.

Observing such circumstances the Publication Division of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams has published about hundred booklets in Telugu about the lives of famous sages and great men written by various authors under the editorship of Dr.S.B. Raghunathacharya under "Bala Bharati Series". The response to these books is tremendous and it has given impetus to publish them in other languages also. To begin with, some of the books are now brought out in English and Hindi by T.T.D. for the benefit of boys and girls and the interested public.

These booklets, primarily intended to the growing children and also to the elders to study and narrate the stories to their children, will go a long way to sublimate the aspirations of the children to greater heights.

**R. SRI HARI**  
Editor-In-Chief  
T.T.D.

## **Welcome To Srinivasa Bala Bharati Series**

The series is the outcome of abundant grace of Lord Sri Venkateswara.

This will be an unfailing source of inspiration to the young.

It enshrines the best of Bharatiya tradition. May this noble endeavour be successful.

India has been known for its culture and civilization, its ethical and dharmic way of life from time immemorial. India has marched ahead with its commitment to dharma, its resistance to adharma, its espousal of life-affirming values and its humane attitude to life as a journey towards God realization. Those who embodied these values in their life have been a beacon of light to us. Their impact is deep on the life we lead. Young boys and girls will find them exemplary and feel proud of their invaluable heritage. They will love their motherland and dedicate themselves to its service.

It is therefore necessary that the young learn about these great men and women so that they will realize their indebtedness to them for their selfless contribution to the enrichment of life. This should indeed be a chief component of true education which ensures the perennial continuity of Indian Culture and Civilization. SRINIVASA BALA BHARATI SERIES has come into existence to acquaint the young boys and girls with right perspective of Indian life and values through a series of booklets written exclusively for this purpose describing in brief the lives of great men and women.

We welcome you to share our joy in launching these booklets.

**S.B. Raghunathacharya**

Chief Editor

It was the city of Kasi. Holy Ganga was flowing in full. Having completed ablutions and worship of Sandhya (twilight), he was offering a prayer. Only moments passed, and to the amazement of all around, a divine lute (veena) materialized in his hands. He danced in bliss, playing on that lute gifted by Goddess Devi, and people touched his feet in reverence. The one question in all minds is, "Who's this great man?" He was no other than Muttuswami Deekshitar, who had earned the kindness of Lord Guruguha. The prayer to Ganapati sung by one and all, Vaataapi Ganapatim bhaje, is his composition. Of the triad of musicians, he is reputed as Deekshitar.

Of the musician trinity that was native to Tiruvarur in Tanjore district, Tyagaraja was the first and the third was Shyamasastri. The gem in their midst was Muttuswami Deekshitar whose life itself was one of an austerity of music. His heart melted to see the region of Ettayapuram beset with famine. He sang a composition (Kriti) in the raga Amritavarshini. And there was torrential rainfall. The people of that region who were for long a thirst were boundlessly delighted. Deekshitar stands out as the very first example of unpretentious living and of the noble ideal of service to humanity with the help of the skill he acquired in music.

**- Editor in chief**



## **MUTTUSWAMI DEEKSHITAR**

### **The Musician Triad :**

It was a century when the Goddess of Music held her sovereignty, the time between 1750 and 1850. A good number of great persons in the field of Music in all countries of the world were born during this period. In European countries, Beethoven, Mozart and other musicians of repute were born during this period. In South India, Tyagayya, Deekshitar, Shyamasastri, often called the Musician Triad, all lived in these times. This triad was as well-known as the triad of Telugu poets Nannaya, Tikkana, and Errana.

All the three of them were born in Tiruvarur of Tanjore district. Their musical compositions (Kritis) belong to three different schools. It is a rare occurrence that these were initiated by three divine preceptors. In the world of music Deekshitar is as great as Tyagayya. Tyagaraja lived during the period between 1767-1847; Deekshitar between 1775-1835; and Shyamasastri between 1768-1827.

### **How lucky was Tiruvarur :**

All the three were blessed with divine knowledge. Sage Narada himself came down and gave Tyagaraja the book on music called Swararnavam. Likewise, Lord Subrahmanya put sugar candy in the mouth of Deekshitar and inspired him to write devotional songs

(Keertans) as sweet as sugar candy. Shyama Sastry was given spiritual initiation by Sangeeta Swamy. Tyagayya composed 24 thousand odd Kritis; Shyama Sastry and Deekshitar wrote four hundred odd. It was the good fortune of Tiruvarur which had owned the greatness of producing these renowned composers. The way in which all the three of them breathed their last as they willed, was a thing to be remembered long. Deekshitar was the youngest of the three.

**Birth :**

Govinda Deekshit was minister in the court of Raghunatha Nayak of Tanjore's Nayak dynasty. He was a patron of music and literature. He belonged to the school of Venkatamakhi. In that lineage Muttuswami Deekshitar was born of Ramaswami Deekshitar. Ramaswami earned good name in music. He was the founder - composer of raga Hamsadhvani. Muttuswami had two brothers named Balaswami and Chinnaswami. In the year Manmatha corresponding to 1775, on the 24th day of March, a son was born to the delight of Ramaswami and Subbamma. The star Krithika was on the ascent then. The boy was named Muttuswami after the name of Lord Muttukumaraswami of the temple of Vaideeswara in the district of Tanjore. His parents believed that the boy was a boon of the deity.

**Education :**

A flower is known by its scent, as the saying goes. Muttuswami displayed his genius even in his childhood.

He grew up to be a genius who learned anything if he had heard it once. Such a person is called eka-sandha-grahi. He became a favorite disciple of his teachers. He learned the Vedas at sixteen. He learned the Kavyas, Natakas and the science called poetics. He began to receive training in music. He ardently wished to learn several sciences such as Astrology, Medicine and the occult.

### **Devotional songs (Kirtans) in childhood :**

He learnt Sanskrit well and mastered the art of song-writing. Though he wrote songs in Tamil and Telugu, Sanskrit diction gained the upper hand. His style is a hard nut to crack. From childhood itself he obtained Sree-vidya through meditating on Goddess Devi. With the exception of Jayadeva's ashtapadis, none else wrote such powerful devotional songs (Kirtans) in Sanskrit as Deekshitar. The Telugu language had by then gained a suppleness that would suit song-compositions. Gopalakrishna Bharati was then writing in Tamil. Deekshitar wrote kirtans in Sanskrit well balancing the sound of words.

### **He had his own style :**

Right from the moment of initiation to music Deekshitar used to sing in his own style. He used to lose himself in the resonant sound of the lute. His teachers wondered at it but they were pleased with his conception. They guessed that he would be a genius

in future. They thought that he earned proficiency in all arts and sciences as a consequence of the good deeds of his earlier births. His fellow students looked on him with affection. His parents brought him up in love. Ramaswami Deekshitar prided in Muttuswami that, of all his sons, he was the one that would glorify his lineage.

#### **To concerts with father :**

Ramaswami Deekshitar got his son married at a tender age. Muttuswami deeply immersed in learning the sastras (sciences), had no thought of home. Earnest learning and practicing music, was his daily routine. He used to attend music concerts with his father. He used to enjoy the sight of his father receiving gifts from kings. He practiced music as his listeners enjoyed it forgetting all. He used to sing the devotionals (Kirtans) in a special style.

#### **Absentmindedness :**

Muttuswami was always preoccupied with music and cared little about family life. He was married when he was still an innocent boy. His wife lived as it pleased her mother-in-law and father-in-law. Muttuswami, after attending to the morning routine, used to sit in meditation and rise up again at lunch time. Rest followed his lunch and his evenings were given to practicing music. This way Muttuswami was preoccupied day and night and had no time for anything else. His parents were restless about it but helpless too. They were

amazed that their son gave not a moment's thought to his wife.

### **Second Marriage :**

All his relatives began to think of Muttuswami. They presumed that the cause for Muttuswami's disinterestedness in family life was that his wife was not particularly good looking. Born in a traditional, conservative family, she did the household chores extremely well. She waited for her husband's favour. But Muttuswami was not in a mood to notice anything. He was always meditating upon God. His relatives advised his parents that he would be drawn to family life if he was married again to a beautiful bride. The elders blessed the proposal saying 'Let it be so'. The second marriage was performed strictly according to the customary ritual. But there was no change in Muttuswami's conduct. He married but was not entangled in family attractions. He did not abandon meditating on God.

### **The estate of Manali :**

His father Ramaswami was a great scholar in music. Hearing his concert one day, Zamindar Muthukrishna Modaliyar of the estate of Manali was highly excited with happiness. He touched the feet of Ramaswami and, with folded hands, imploringly said, "We deem it our good fortune if you could accept the position of estate scholar' in our court." Ramaswami

expressed his acquiescence with positive silence. He went with his family to live in Manali.

### **The Blessings of Yogi Chidambaranatha :**

Muttuswami got into the good books of the officers of the estate. He made for himself a good name in music. One day a scholar of music called Chidambaranatha yogi came to see the Zamindar. He lodged in the house of Ramaswami in Manali, intending to please the Zamindar by participating in the concerts of the court. Ramaswami and Chidambaranatha yogi used to discuss the secrets of the art of music. This continued happily for a few months. Muttuswami used to draw deep joy listening to their discourses. He got his doubts clarified by them as part of their discourses. Chidambaranatha yogi was elated by Muttuswami's passion for Music. He blessed the young man with a prosperous future. Muttuswami's parents were elated with joy.

### **Pilgrimage to Kasi :**

Chidambaranatha yogi intended to go on a pilgrimage from thence to Kasi. Being closely acquainted with him for the past few months, Ramaswami's family bade him farewell but not without some regret. The yogi invited Muttuswami with his two wives to join him on his pilgrimage to Kasi. And though it was a long journey, Ramaswami endorsed the proposal. As a father he hoped that this might bring

about a change in his son's attitude. Muttuswami accompanied Chidambaranatha yogi with his family and reached Kasi. He spent some time there worshipping Kasi Viswanath.

### **Initiation to Incantation (mantropadesam) :**

Chidambaranath yogi developed an inordinate affection for Muttuswami. This yogi naturally loved this young man who was devoted to meditating upon God. He thought it desirable to initiate this youth who was untouched by worldly pleasures and indifferent to family ties, to a holy incantation (mantra). At an auspicious hour he initiated him to Sreevidya mantra. Muttuswami carried on the incantation with austerity, full focus and an unwavering attention which pleased the yogi.

### **Practice of music :**

Muttuswami at sunrise bathed in river Ganga, worshipped Lord Visweswara and Goddess Annapurna and returned home at noon every day. His two wives attended to household chores and did cooking and saw to it that he was in no way put to inconvenience. In the evenings he went for a stroll and forgot himself in practicing music. Festivals moved away. He spent five years in the incantation of the mantra without any attention to the world. He was surrounded by a glowing unearthly splendor consequent on his austere meditation of Goddess Devi. His two wives prayed

him that they should return to their native village. The yogi told Muttuswami that he had attained mantra-siddhi or power of the spell and might therefore return home to his parents.

Muttuswami was not satisfied. He expressed to the yogi his doubt about attaining mantra-siddhi. He felt that notwithstanding his attentive incantation Goddess Devi did not bless him with her kindness. The yogi knew also that Muttuswami would achieve the highest goal in music. But he intended to clear Muttuswami's doubt. He thought that Muttuswami would be a changed man.

### **Your wish will be fulfilled :**

Early the following morning the preceptor and his disciple went to the banks of River Ganga. Muttuswami



offered arghyam (venerable oblation) to the Sun-god (Surya). He said doubtingly” I have no indications that I have obtained fulfillment of my incantation.” “Don’t entertain any doubt in this regard. Tomorrow when you come here to the river alone to bathe, meditate and, standing in knee-deep



waters, stretch both your lifted hands with palms up and express in your mind whatever wish you have. Even as you lift your hands to the sky with palms up, your wish will be fulfilled” said the yogi. All that day Muttuswami meditated more devoutly than usual, focusing his body, mind and spirit on Goddess Devi, the deity of the incanted spell.

**Present that lute (Veena) to me :**

On sunrise Muttuswami as usual went to bathe in the river. Brahmins were all around watching him. Muttuswami plunged in water and rose up. He uttered the Gayatri mantra, offered arghyam; and in purity chanted the devi mantra. He expressed his heart’s desire as advised by the yogi. His words were unclear, being in a whisper, but the others who were bathing on either side of him, heard them and wondered. Some took him for a madman. “Devi! Give me that lute (Veena) which was played upon by Goddess Saraswati for the bliss of Brahma, the creator, and whose melody has the efficacy to control the entire world.” So prayed Muttuswami. There was an inflamed splendor of light on his face. The very next minute there materialized in his hands a lute (Veena), smaller in size than the ordinary lutes but very bright. He lifted it to his eyes with reverence and began to gently strike its strings with his fingers. He came out of the river and danced in ecstasy. (this Veena is even today being worshipped in the house of Deekshitar.)

**Return to the estate of Manali :**

The people around him were stunned at his divine power and touched his feet in reverence and praised his great power in elaborate words. They touched the lute presented to him by Goddess Devi and felt that their lives had become meaningful. They praised Muttuswami as one born with a mission on earth. The yogi was gladdened seeing that divine gift of lute (Veena). He gave him mantra which would bestow on him the eight great siddhis. He declared that Muttuswami would be a nobly renowned man. He taught him the science of Vedanta thoroughly and advised him to return to the estate of Manali. Yogi knew that his end was near. He wished that he should not create any discomfort to Muttuswami. That was his real intention in sending him away. Muttuswami with his two wives set out on his journey. People who had already known of Muttuswami's divine power by hearsay played host to him all along his way.

The ruler of the estate of Manali received him on the outskirts of the city, welcoming him with poorna-Kumbha. The citizens of Manali shouting hip-hip-hurras honoured him as they would honour a great soul. In an effort to please the gods Muttuswami performed the sacrifices called antar-yoga and bahir yoga. He believed that his life was blessed in the service of his parents. The Zamindar supplied all the needs of the family.

Muttuswami was chanting the mantra actively. His mind was gradually drawn away from worldly pleasures. He treated his two wives merely as co-residents in the family. Both his wives were troubled at heart that they had no children. Muttuswami was free from such worry. Time rolled on. Ramaswami was elated to see his sons's devotion to God.

### **Muttuswami in Tiruttani :**

After living in Manali for a long time Muttuswami wished to go to Tiruttani, a pilgrimage centre of Lord Subrahmanya and set out on the journey. The Zamindar was sorry about it and said that a music maestro of his caliber would have brought renown to the estate of Manali. But Muttuswami said, "God's will shall be done" and reached Tiruttani. There, day after day he went up the hill to the temple of Lord Subrahmanyeswara and worshipped him with the nectar of his music.

There was no worry for him about his daily needs of the family. The Zamindar of Manali sent him as annual honorarium all that was needed for the sustenance of his family. Music lovers and his disciples looked on him with affection and respect. Muttuswami was totally given to music and meditation, oblivious of all other worldly activities. He felt that after landing in Tiruttani he had gained a certain peace of mind inexpressible in words.

**Here is God’s blessing, open your mouth :**

One evening Muttuswami was lost in meditation, sitting right in front of the sanctum sanctorum. It was getting dark. The cooings and chirpings of birds were in whispers now. The temple was empty of devotees. Somebody rang the temple bell. A saint came out of the temple near Muttuswami who was lost in the incantation of the fifteen-lettered (panchadasakshari) mantra. The saint had a divine aura. Muttuswami opened his eyes, saw him and prostrated before him.

“My son! I am pleased well with your austere meditation. I have brought for you the remnants of the food offered to God (bhagavat-prasada). Here it is, open your mouth.” So saying, the saintly person dropped sugar-candy into the mouth of Muttuswami.

Muttuswami received it as God’s favour.

“Victory be thine!” said the saint and went out of sight. Muttuswami, for a moment, looked as if he woke up from a dream.

**The New song (keertan) :**

He understood that no saint (sadhu) came there and gave him Prasada but Lord Subrahmanyeswara himself. His hair bristled with joy. Unknown sweetness of nectar flowed and filled his throat. His mind was in a flight. In that sweet experience, poetic inspiration tided forth. He sang in full-throated ecstasy “Sreenathadi guruguho Jayati”. His words thus flowing

out surprised him. A new song in a new mode was born.

Muttuswami turned homeward. Memories of the hearty occasion lingered on in his mind. The song (Keertanam) that rushed out spontaneously in the raga Malava goula set to adi-tala sounded marvellous. Sarali-Swaram in the pallavi (burden of the song) along with janta-swaram (couplet notes) and in the anu-pallavi, alankaras melodied forth. He was blissful that his first devotional song (keertan) was the fruit of God's grace on him. On his way home another keertan spontaneously flowed out of his mouth. In the raga Ananda bhairavi he sang "manasa guruguha".

### **Seven keertans on Guruguha :**

His disciples at home were surprised to see their revered teacher's delectable mood. Muttuswami sang for them the two keertans. In a short time the whole of



Tiruttani knew this legendary episode. All people praised the sugar candy diction of the keertans being the result of God's grace. They congratulated Muttuswami for obtaining God's vision as a result of his austere meditation. They touched his feet in reverence that he obtained a darshan of God. This event made a deep impression on his mind. He composed seven keertans on Lord Guruguha who blessed him with sweet utterances and sang them in joy. His keertans were composed in the seven cases of grammatic inflections.

#### **Vatapi Ganapatim bhaje :**

At a particular spot in Tiruttani temple compound there was a statue of Vinayaka in triangular shape. Vatapi ganapatim bhaje was dedicated to this Ganapati who was in the shape of pranava or aum. This composition is being sung as the first keertan by all scholars of music in their concerts. It is a mellifluous keertan in the raga Hamsa-dhvani. In Kamalamba temple in Tiruttani, Devi was installed facing northeast. During nights Muttuswami used to enjoy the ritual of deeparadhana of the goddess, from a distance of about half a furlong from the threshold, playing on the lute (veena). It was but Devi's darshan that had made his efforts fruitful.

#### **The percussion instrument with five heads :**

There was another wonder in that temple: There was a musical instrument with five heads. The

instrument was in the shape of a large kettle. It was made of five metals and had five heads. If this skin-covered instrument was played upon, each of its heads keeps a different Sruti. Muttuswami used to play this instrument with both his hands in the mode that Sama Veda was sung. Its sound resembled the sound of a pair of mridangams. Only Muttuswami was authorized to play on it in the temple. The trustees of the temple made a law of it. (Even today this instrument is being played upon by the descendants of Deekshitar.)

#### **Numberless disciples :**

In those days Deekshitar was always surrounded by disciples. Tirukkadayur Bharati, Veena Venkata Ramaiah, Subrahmanyaiah, Tambiyappa, Tanjore Ponnaiah, Vadivel, Ramaswami, Bilwavanam, Ayyaswami, Kamalam, Vallalargudi Ammanni, and many more sat around him and sang the Keertans. They also learned the secrets of the science of music. Having mastered the musical instruments they won laurels at courts of kings. They revered Muttuswami devoutly as their teacher.

#### **Navagraha kritis :**

Deekshitar was very compassionate to his students. Once the disciple named Sudhamathalam Tambiyappan had unbearable stomach-pain, and he wriggled with pain. He went without food. Deekshitar saw how excruciating his pain was and pitied him. Astrologers scanned Tambiyappan's horoscope and said that his

stomach-pain was owing to the positions of the planets Jupiter (guru) and Saturn (sani). Deekshitar learned about it and thought well. He wished that his disciple be free from pain one way or the other. Filling it with the essence of the Brihaspati-kavacha mantra he composed the keertan with the burden (pallavi) “Brihaspati tarapate brahmajate namostu te” in the raga Atthana. In the raga Yadukula kambhoji “divakara tanujam sanaischaram dhirataram santatam chintaye ham” was composed to appease the planet Saturn (sani).

One day in privacy he taught Tambiyappan these keertans and asked him to sing them with full-minded attention. In ten days Tambiyappan was totally free from all pain. Both these keertans have become very popular among music-lovers. He composed keertans on the other planets also and sang them with joy. These are reputed in the world as navagraha kritis. Likewise he composed nine kritis known as Kamalamba navavartana keertans.

His disciples made Deekshitar’s keertans very popular by singing them in their concerts. Muscle in music and tenderness in diction, are the hall mark of Deekshitar. The composers of padam and vaggeyakaras of later times emulated Deekshitar’s school of singing. Both Deekshitar and Tyagayya are reputed for their compositions that follow the bhava or meaning of the text.



### **Residence in Kanchi :**

Deekshitar shifted his residence with family to Kanchipuram. His disciples and younger brothers followed him there. He spent four years worshipping Goddess Kamakshi of Kanchi. Deekshitar's meditation of Sreevidya in the presence of the deity was very fruitful. Gradually old age took hold of him. His younger brothers Chinnaswami and Balaswami, following him, sang and made popular his compositions. In the presence of Goddess Kamakshi Muttuswami composed the keertans 'Kanja dalaya takshi' and 'Ekamranatham bhaje ham'.

### **Friendship of Upanishad-brahma :**

Deekshitar was pre-occupied with worship of Ekamreswar and Goddess Kamakshi without any worldly concerns. Upanishad-brahmam, a resident of Kanchipuram, was a great philosopher. He knew the secrets of Vedanta. In the evenings Deekshitar used to engage himself in philosophical discourses with Upanishad brahmam. He personally set to tune, fixing the raga and tala in alphabetical order, Ramashtapadis written by Upanishad Brahmam. Since then a philosophical attitude developed in Deekshitar.

### **Eighteen mudras :**

Deekshitar's keertans lack in unity of time but expansion of raga and gamaka (nuances of exposition), these win the hearts of the listeners at a performance.

Tyagayya earned national renown. Shyama Sastry's keertans became famous. During this very period Deekshitar made his own place secure in the world of music. In his compositions are found eighteen mudras (logos) like raga-mudra, vaggeyakara-mudra, Kshetra-mudra, prabandha-mudra, raja-mudra etc. So it became possible to find out where exactly the particular song was sung or composed. It is noteworthy that he sang or composed spontaneously the different keertans when he visited the different pilgrim centres.

#### **Deekshitar reached Tiruvarur :**

Deekshitar decided to go back to Tiruvarur. But his friends, disciples and devotees strongly objected to his decision. They said that they lived with him for four years and would follow him wherever he went. Upanishad Brahmam, the philosopher-yogi prevented them, saying that one would reside at one place or the other in accordance with one's planetary aspects, and that Deekshitar would make a name for himself wherever he resided. So saying, he blessed him. By that time Tyagaraja was already established as nadabrahma (creator of melody).

Deekshitar composed and sang a good number of keertans dedicated to Tyagarajeswara but with the mudra or logo of guruguha. He added keertans specially on Anandeswara, Siddheswara, Achaleswara, Hatakeswara, and Valmeekeswara, all deities of Tiruvarur.

### **Panchalinga kritis :**

Muttuswami Deekshitar wrote Panchalinga kritis in a sweet, soft style. He composed and sang in joy the Keertans 'chintaya mam' in worship of Ekamranatheswar, 'jamboopate' of Tiruvanaikkavaleeswar, 'arunachala natha' of Arunachaleswar, of Kalahasteeswar with the logo of 'Sree Kalahasteesa', and of Chidambaresa. 'anandanatana', respectively. He composed tanavarnas, and ragamalikas in rare ragas.

### **Navavarna kritis :**

His nine compositions known as Navavarna kritis in the name of kamalambika are streams of honey. The sixteen kritis written on the idols of Vighneswara near Tiruvarur are known as shodasa ganapati kritis. One of the sixteen is 'Vatapiganapatim bhaje'. The kritis 'Sree maha ganapati 'panchamatanga mukha', 'Sree mooladhara' are also in vogue.

### **I shall stay in Tiruvarur :**

He composed keertans in the tradition of Venkatamakhi's raga-classification with an extraordinary flow of language and authority on Sanskrit. His brothers and disciples took them into people. The king of Madhura was appreciative of the sweetness of those keertans and invited Deekshitar to his estate. But he decided to live in Tiruvarur. His brothers Chinnaswami

and Balaswami set out to fulfil the king's desire. They lived for a time in Madhura with the kind attentions of the king who loved music and literature. The king offered gifts to their elder brother Muttuswami. After a time Chinnaswami passed away.

### **Balaswami in Ettayapuram :**

Balaswami was very much upset by the death of his younger brother. He could not withstand the agony. He was disillusioned and accompanied by his disciple Hari, he set out on a pilgrimage. He worshipped Ramalingeswar in Sethu and entered Ettayapuram. The king there had already heard of the scholarship and skill in music of Deekshitar's brothers and therefore he appointed Balaswami as Asthana vidwan in his court and thus honoured him.

### **Pilgrimage again :**

Deekshitar was troubled at heart by the death of one brother and lack of knowledge of the whereabouts of the other, Balaswami. Though he was childless, he thought that his younger brother was his son and this aggravated his agony. He was convinced, because of his philosophical bent of mind that the death of his brother was a common, natural incident. But he began to worry about his other brother who had left home in disillusionment. Age was telling on him. He was not fit for journeys. But he set out in search of his brother as his affection compelled him.

### **Favour of Guruguha in the dream :**

He was in mental agony. That evening at the time of moon-rise Deekshitar sang his own composition 'Chandram bhaja' of the navagraha-kritis in the following way :-

**Chandram bhaja manasa  
 Sadhu-hridaya sadrisam !!  
 Indradi lokapaladita taresam  
 Indum shodasa-kala-dharam nisakaram  
 Indira sahodaram sudhakara-manisam  
 Shankara mauli-Vibhushanam  
 Sheeta kiranam chaturbhujam  
 Madana cchatram kshapakaram venkatesa  
 nayanam  
 Viranmanojananam vidhum kumuda mitram  
 Vidhi guru guha vaktram.  
 Sasankam geeshpateh sapanu graha patram  
 Sarachandrika dhavala prakasa gatram  
 Kankana keyura hara makutadi dharam.  
 Pankajaripum Rohini priyakara chaturam!!**

[The song means: Worship Chandra, O heart! Who is like the heart of a saint, who is the lord of the stars, worshipped by the powers of the worlds like Indra; who is possessor of the sixteen kalas and who makes the night; who is called Indu, who is the brother of Indira, and who is the nectar-rayed. Worship him ever who is an ornament on the head of Sankara, who has

cool rays and four arms, and who is Madana's parasol, who is the maker of the night and who is an eye of Lord Venkatesa; who was born of the manas (mind) of Virat, who was Vidhu and a friend of the white water-lily, and who was the face of Vidhi and Guruguha; who was Shashanka, the receiver of Brihaspati's curse and boon, whose body shines white with his light in the season of sharat, who is adorned with bracelets, necklaces, a crown etc.]

Deekshitar fell deep asleep in the blooming moonlight, as he sang this composition. In the dream world he had inkling that he was in the presence of God. He felt that he was blessed by Guruguha and that he could find his brother with some effort.

In a wink of the eye he woke up from this dreamy state. He no longer felt lonely. He explained to his disciples the dream-experience he had had.

### **Muttuswami in Shattur :**

The following day Deekshitar followed by his two wives and disciple Subrahmanyaiah set out for Madhura. He reached Shattur and saw the divine splendour of Shattur Perumal. He saw the devotees worshipping the deity and fulfilling their wishes. He thought that by the grace of this deity he could get to know the whereabouts of his brother. He landed near the mandapam at the door of the temple and began the

procedure of worship. His two wives helped him in serving perumal. After completion of kainkarya, he went into deep meditation for a moment as he was studying Nalayara-prabandham.

The worship in the temple of the deity ended. The devotees who were returning after taking prasadam, came to see the new-comers in the mandapa of the temple. Deekshitar's reputation had already reached remote villages. People in those days narrated his miracles in joy. Some of them touched his feet in reverence and made enquiries about him. Some others were requesting him to sing his Navagraha-stotramalika. But the inner agony was evident on the face of Deekshitar. He hoped that he could get to hear about his brother through one of them. But he hesitated to ask them directly.

### **News of Balaswami's Marriage :**

Some youth saw Deekshitar in the midst of the encircling crowd of people. It appeared that they were not at all bothered by music and literature. Among them they began to talk in the following manner.

“Hei, Sudarshanam! Did you ever hear the name of the king of Ettayapuram?”

“O God! God! Who doesn't know about this king?! He loves to fill his ears with music. He is a lover of art.”

“Hei, Krishnamachari! If I gave you a chance you would, it appears, narrate to me the history of Ettayapura Estate. But open up, what’s the matter?”

“Didn’t I say he is patron of the arts!. In his court there’s a scholar named Balaswami who joined him of late.”

Deekshitar heard these words. Tears of joy rolled on to his cheeks. He immediately neared the youth, pushing aside the crowd.

“My child! What has happened to Balaswami?” he asked eagerly.

“Balaswami is to be married tomorrow.”

Deekshitar danced for joy and sang the keertan in full-throated melody “ananda natana” , praising the glory of Chidambara Natesha. In ecstasy he embraced those youth.

“Balaswami is my brother. I’ve been wandering hither and thither, trying to learn of his whereabouts. Perumal has given me this happy piece of news through you. I must leave for Ettayapuram without delay.” So saying, Deekshitar was silent for a while.

He spontaneously sang a new composition “Venkateswara Ettappa-bhoopati mashraye ham” in a mellifluous tone. His disciple Subrahmanyaiah learnt it by rote for whom the composition was meant. The keertan was in the raga Megharanjani.



Deekshitar's wives had a curiosity to learn the details of Balaswami's marriage. They gathered information through Krishnamachary. It was said that the king had arranged the marriage with a bride from Rameshwaram. Thousands of Vaishnavas were attending the marriage.

### **Journey to Ettayapuram :**

Deekshitar set out with his family in the company of the vaishnava bride. He sang in bliss his keertans all along the way. Nobody felt any fatigue of the journey. He was more blissful that he could trace out his brother than that he was on his way to his brother's marriage. They journeyed on foot, leaving behind the villages they passed through.

### **A serpent danced in the court :**

Muttuswami felt no fatigue of journey because of his ardent desire to see Balaswami. Balaswami was his younger brother. He was a very good scholar in both Sanskrit and Telugu. He was well-versed in the objectives (Lakshya) and characteristics (Lakshana) of the secrets of music. He earned scholarship in western music and Hindustani music and received laurels from the king of the estate of Manali. His brother Chinnaswami was an expert Vainika. He won the great regard of kings' courts. In the court one day Chinnaswami sang raga Nagavarali and a large serpent danced with its hood lifted up and spread fully. The

courtiers were agitated and there was hullabaloo. Muttuswami saw this and said to his brother, “Brother! Don’t be frightened. Play on the veena (lute) non-stop.” As music poured out from the veena, the serpent was appeased and lowering its hood in a salute of respect, it went away. Muttuswami had hearty affection for his brothers of this character.

Muttuswami, on his walk to Ettayapur, saw many villages. At one place he saw the crop dried up for want of rain. Muttuswami’s benevolent heart melted. His heart was troubled at the sight of the ripe crop dried up which otherwise would have given a good yield. He was filled with compassion. He went into the shadow of a nearby tree for a minute. His family and disciples looked on him with surprise. They were upset to find Muttuswami shedding tears profusely. They were amazed when they came to know the reason for his sorrow.

### **Torrential rain with raga Amritavarshini :**

In no time Muttuswami went into meditating. He worshipped Goddess Amriteswari. Spontaneously he sang in the raga Amritavarshini appealingly the keertan ananda-amritavarshini amritakarshini. Nature was overjoyed. The people around him looked on with keen wonder. Disciples wrote down the ambrosial words of their teacher. They were all elated by the flow of this nectar. On the clear sky appeared black clouds.



There were signs of a rainfall. All the villagers gathered there. Their faces which lacked luster because of long years of famine, now brightened up with joy.

They thought that Muttuswami was the incarnation of God Varuna and were happy that their hardships ended, time had come for their fields to yield good crops. They learned by asking the disciples about their great teacher. Scholars of music who could gauge the melody of his music, touched his feet in deep respect. The elders of the village saluted him with honour. Muttuswami was not in a state of mind to notice all these things. He sang the keertan in full swing and in ecstasy.

Gradually the clouds on the sky became dense and denser. In a minute torrential downpour started to drench the earth and all. None sheltered himself or herself under the trees. They were all getting drenched in the rain blissfully. Deekshitar sang again.

**Anandamrita karshini amritavarshini  
 Hariharadi pujite shive bhavani.  
 Sree nandanadi samrakshani**

**Sree guruguha janani chidrupini  
 Sananda hridaya nilaye sadaye  
 Sadyah suhrishti hetave dyam  
 Satatam chintaye amriteswari  
 Salilam varshaya varshaya varshaya  
 Anandamritakarshini - II**

As he sang, the entire world of the living and the lifeless was drenched top to toe in the downpour of rain. The joy of the villagers knew no bounds.

[The meaning of the song is as follows :- O thou cultivator of the nectar of bliss! O amritavarshini, thou that rainiest nectar! Worshipped by gods like Hara, O Shive! O Bhavani! Protector of incarnations like Rama; mother of Sree Guruguha, embodiment of knowing (Jnana, Chit) Thou Dweller in the joyful hearts! Thou compassionate! the cause of spontaneous downpour of rain from heaven! I meditate even on you, Amriteswari! rain water ! rain ! rain !. O thou cultivator of the nectar of bliss!.]

It was a region of black soil. Muttuswami was travelling on a two-wheeled cart. The wheels of the cart got stuck up in the mud of the black soil. The disciples understood it. The rain stopped. The villagers prayed Muttuswami devoutly to stay in that village for the rest of the day. But Deekshitar did not comply with their requests because he intended to be present at the marriage of his brother. The villagers dragged

the cart out of the sticky mud and bade him farewell ceremoniously.

**The brothers are united :**

The youth that accompanied him helped him in driving the cart. The cart made slow progress under adverse circumstances. The villagers followed him for a distance to bid farewell. His journey progressed and he reached Ettayapur with his relatives by that evening. He was in full joy when he saw his brother.

Seeing the deep affections of the brothers, the disciples were surprised. Time was spent in finding out one another's welfare. His agony about his brother came to an end that day. That night both the brothers sat until late in the night singing and listening to the latest compositions in new ragas. They thus enjoyed one another's presence.

The relatives and disciples who came to bless the marriage naturally became part of the festivities. The king (maharaja) himself was taking care of providing them with board and lodging. He supervised all the activities as if the marriage was in his own house, of his own people. He made special arrangements for the bride's party. A music concert was arranged for the night.

**Salutations to Nadajyothi :**

The maharaja built a house for Balaswami Deekshitar as a token of respect for his mastery.

Balaswami lived in the very house. The news-bearers informed the king about the arrival of Muttuswami. The king came on foot and touched the feet of Deekshitar reverentially. He said that he was offering prostrate salutations on behalf of his estate to “Nadajyoti”. By that time Muttuswami’s reputation had already spread far and wide.

The king requested that Muttuswami might sing his composition in the raga Megharanjani. Deekshitar complied with his request. The king was blissful. The night passed in the presence of the king and in conversing with his brother. Disciples and relatives were elated by Muttuswami’s achievement in music and the fame he had earned. That had no effect on Deekshitar who was not entangled in mundane matters.

On the day of the marriage at sunrise Muttuswami sang the keertan which he had earlier composed on sun-God.

**“Suryamurte namostu te sundara  
cchayadhipate  
Karyakaranatmaka jagatprakasha  
simharasyadhipate  
Aryavinute tejah sphurte arogyadi phalada  
keerte.”**

So he sang worshipping the deity on the occasion of his brother’s marriage.

[The song means: O Surya! I salute you, O Lord of beautiful chaya! You illumine the cause and effect world! You are the Lord of the Zodiac sign leo. Your splendor has been praised by the noble. You are famed to be the giver of good health and the like.]

The maharaja got the festivities of the marriage celebrated with personal interest. Though Muttuswami was not likely to take interest in worldly affairs, he inquired the welfare of all his relatives with pleasure. On the request of the relatives, that evening, he sang his own compositions.

The speciality of Muttuswami Deekshitar's keertans was that he had accommodated in them the stamp or logo of his favourite deity Subrahmanya swami in the form of Guruguha. Likewise he inserted the names of the raga of each of his keertans into the literary text. He followed this kind of a new tradition. The people praised him whole-heartedly.

### **Journey to Tiruvarur :**

As the marriage celebrations ended Muttuswami Deekshitar set out to Tiruvarur. He left his elder wife there to give company to the new bride. With his younger wife and a group of disciples he took leave of the king who prayed that Deekshitar might stay in his estate for some time longer. He responded to this friendly request with equally pleasing words and left for Tiruvarur. He left with his brother all the gifts

endowed upon him by the king. He was happy singing the praise of God and all through his journey he spent his time with his keertans. He reached Tiruvarur. The villagers there received him with a huge welcome. Deekshitar shared with them the happiness of the news of his brother's marriage.

As he grew older his spiritual meditation also grew deeper. He made it a habit to sing the praise of God. In leisure times he used to meet Tyagayya and Shyamasastri who were older than him and participated in the discourses on music. It was the year 1834. He was sixty. He did not feel the burden of his family but he began to feel the weight of his age. He used to go worshipping all the temples in Tiruvarur. On the temple premises were present the nine planets (navagrahas). It was a special feature that these statues of navagrahas (nine planets) were installed in a row instead of in the different quarters. He spent time in praising the navagrahas.

### **The heart that receives the good :**

Deekshitar was not carried away by traditional thoughts uncompromisingly. It was the time when the impact of the English language began to be felt by Indians. He heard the British national anthem sung in gettogethers. Deekshitar's mind was attracted by this and other songs, with their raga-exposition techniques. He liked the Hindustani mode of singing. He accepted



these techniques in composing his kritis. In the name of the deity of Pulivalam he composed a keertan in the style Manipravala.

### **Letter from Ettayapuram :**

The year Manmatha came. Messengers of the king came with a letter to Muttuswami Deekshitar, from Ettayapuram. Following inquiries of welfare Deekshitar read the letter.

“The preceptor feet of honourable Nadajyoti Muttuswami Deekshitar, the king of Ettayapuram salutes. We have no tidings of your welfare ever since you left Ettayapuram. We have decided to get our eldest son married on the advice of our raja-purohiths (the royal priests). It is our wish and request that you respond positively to this invitation of ours for your august presence and blessings on the occasion of the marriage.”

Deekshitar, reading the letter in full, heaved a sigh. He sent the messengers away giving them his acceptance of the royal invitation. The messengers left.

### **The last Journey :**

Deekshitar took leave of his disciples and close relatives. He told them clearly that, owing to old age, he could not return to Tiruvarur. He set out for Ettayapuram with family. The scholars of music and disciples in Tiruvarur bade him good bye with tears of affection filling their eyes.

On the outskirts of Ettayapuram the king welcomed him with full honours. Deekshitar participated along with his brother's family in the festivities of the marriage. Relatives from different places came to witness the prince's marriage. Scholars of music and literature were honoured. Deekshitar on the request of the king sang navavarna kritis. It was against the nature of Deekshitar to write compositions dedicated to humans. And the king did not wish that he sang in his praise.

Deekshitar understood that his life's twilight was at hand. The year Manmatha (1835), on the auspicious day of Tulakrishna chaturdasi, Deekshitar was conversing with a group of his disciples. He asked his disciples to sing the kriti 'meenakshi me mudam dehi' in the raga Purvakalyani. The disciples sang in a chorus. He wanted them to sing "meena-lochani pasa vimochani". The disciples did. He wanted them to repeat singing the very song again. Towards the end of the keertan Deekshitar went into meditation and lifting up both his hands in a posture of salutation, he said - 'Sive! pahi' and breathed his last. Nadajyoti was extinguished.

The disciples paid the debt to their teacher by propagating his compositions throughout the country.

