

Sūryamūrte - An Analytical Study

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Abstract: *Sūryamūrte is one among the 7 VāraKṛti - s composed by Muddusvāmi Dīkṣita in rāgaSaurāṣṭram and Catuśra Dhruva tāḷa. There are various musical analyses of this kṛti available, however previous research has been unable to provide a multi - dimensional approach to understanding the beauty of the composition. This study brings across a detailed analysis of the kṛti – the prosodical elements, word - by - word analysis of the sāhitya, some interesting insights about the rāga and tāḷa of the kṛti, some scientific facts about the Sun that relate to the composition, the details of a few temples, their myths and legends which have been crafted with underlying significance within the composition.*

Keywords: Muddusvāmi Dīkṣita, varakṛtis, musical analysis, Sun, Navagraha

1. Introduction

Muddusvāmi Dīkṣita (24th March 1775 – 21st October 1835), one of the Trinities of Carnatic Music along with Tyāgarāja and Śyāma Śāstri, was born in Tiruvarur and got exposure to Sanskrit, the Vēda - s and North Indian Music during his stay in Varanasi with his guru CidambaranāthaYōgi¹. Among his many groupkṛti - s, theVāraKṛti - s of Muddusvāmi Dīkṣita, a set of 7 kṛti - s in praise of the planetary deities, is one of the most intellectually, musically and lyrically appealing sets of compositions.

The Sun is the center star of the Solar System which was formed around 4.5 billion years ago. It is a massive star, and its size is almost 109 times the size of our Earth. As per the manuscript Āryabhaṭīya authored by Āryabhaṭa, the diameter of the sun is 4, 410 yojana - s or 33, 075 miles. The average distance of Sun from Earth is about 150 million kilometres. This distance is defined as 1 Astronomical Unit (1 AU). Everything in our solar system – planets, asteroids, comets and every tiny bit of space debris revolve around the sun. It also keeps the elements of the Solar System intact with its strong gravitational pull. It radiates energy mainly as heat, visible light, ultraviolet and infrared radiation. This intense energy and heat make the sun unfit for life, but the same is what makes life possible on Earth².

Sāhitya

Sūryamūrtenamōstutesundarachāyādhipatē

Kāryakāraṇātmakajagatprakāśasimharāśyādhipatē
Āryavinutatējasphūrtteārokyādīphaladakīrttē

Sārasamitramitrahānōsahasrakiraṇakaṇṇasūnō
Kṛūrapāpaharakṣānōguruguhamōditasvabhānō
Sūri janēditasudinamanesōmādigrahaśikhāmanē
Dhīrārcita karma sāksīṇēdivyatarasaptasvarathīnē

MK

Saurāṣṭrārāmanātrātmanēsauvarṇasvarūpātmanē
Bhāratīśaharīharātmanēbhuktīmuktivitarānātmanē

¹Venkatrama Aiyar, T, L, “Life of MuthuswamiDikshitar”, National Book Trust, 1968.

²<https://solarsystem.nasa.gov/solar-system/sun/overview/>

Word - by - word analysis

Sūryamūrte – Sūrya is equivalent to the combined form of the trimūrte - s, hence the name.

He is the Lord of earthly and heavenly pleasures, the one who gives salvation to those who do not have *punarjanma* rebirth (HōraŚāstra). He is the strength of all yagna - s based on *jīvātma* and *paramātma*. He is the lord of all the eternal divine beings. He is the reason for the rise of the world and its existence.

SundaraChāyādhipate – Husband of Chāya / Lord of illumination and shadow / Lord of visible (luminous) physical body and invisible (shadowed) spiritual self or soul.

KāryaKāraṇātmaka – Reason for every phenomenon

For instance, why does wind flow? To fill the void created by hot air (heated up by the Sun) that rises. Rainfall? To compensate for the water sparsity created by the evaporation of water by the Sun (the Sun is also called ‘Aṛka’ because the Sun makes water ‘Aṛka’ which translates to heat or warm in English).

Why is there brightness? Because the Sun removes the darkness (night) with its illuminance (day). (That is why Sun is called Divākara – the lord of the day)

The greenery of earth is again the blessed new cloth gifted by the Sun. The beautiful ring that He gifts her is sapphire in colour. The river, which is her waist ornament is silver in colour. This is VēdaKalpana, or the poetic imagination given about the couple Sun and Earth in the vēda - s. Dyōr pita, Prithvimāta – Sun is the father and earth is the mother of *prapañca* or the world. (The words Earth and World are different just as house and home).

‘MūrttivēparikalpitaŚāśabhṛtō – HōraŚāstra’

Earth takes 365 and ¼ days to complete one full revolution around the Sun. This period is called the solar year³. Due to the inclination of the earth’s axis, sunrays strike at earth at different angles during different times of the year, creating different seasons, namelyVasanta (Early summer), Grīśma

³<https://observatory.astro.utah.edu/sun.html>

(summer), Varṣa (Rainy), Śarad (Post rainy), Hēmanta (Early winter) and Śiśira (winter) Rtu⁴. The length of day and night varies across seasons. During summer, the length of day is more and during winter, the length of night is more.

Hence, the Sun is the 'ādhāra' or reason for every phenomenon that occurs in the world⁵.

Jagatprakāśaka – One who brightens the whole 'jagat' or world.

Hōra says 'TrailōkyāDīpō Ravi: ' – meaning Ravi or Sun is the light to the 3 worlds. Hence, He is the eternal flame that enlightens the three worlds.

Simharāśyādhipatē – The ruler of Simharāśi

Āryavinutatēja – The Sun's rays are the reason for brightness and colours.

During sunrise, ārya - s pray to the Sun through the Gāyatri mantra. Hence Sūrya is 'āryavinutatējasvi'. Ārya denotes a cultured person, opposite to dasyu or dāsa. In Hindi, there is a word anāṛi derived from anārya meaning 'foolish' or 'uncultured'.

Ārokyādīphaladakīrtte – The one who grants boons like good health and so on.

When the above - saidtējasfall on people, their health improves. Hence the Sun grants the boons of good health.

Sārasamitra – Sun is the friend of Lotus / Lotus blossoms only if sunlight falls on it / Lotus is the eye of wisdom. It is the mind which has a thousand petals. Sun brightens the knowledge and the mind.

Mitra – Friend of all

'mi' means 'to measure'. So mitra means that which allows one person to measure the other person. In other words, just as the sun, carries with it a certain expected motion, measurement carries with it a certain connotation of contract. This meaning is related to the Latin word 'mūtō' meaning 'exchange', which corresponds to the English word 'mutual'⁶.

Bhānu – Bestower of beauty

Sahasrakiraṇa – One with a thousand rays.

AnēkaKiraṇa (Hōra) / SahasraRaśmi (Amarakośam)

Kaṛṇasūno – Father of Kaṛṇa

Krūrāpāpaharakṛsanu – the fire, which removes any sins committed.

'Pataṅgasōmakṛsanuvilōcana' – Mārkaṇḍēyacaritam about 3 eyes of Lord Śiva

Pataṅga means Sun, Sōma means Moon, kṛsānu means fire (agni)

A majestic look through this eye will create a fire that will kill any demons or sins. Sūrya, who has a burning rage within, is equal to Lord Śiva. Meditating upon Sūrya will remove all sins including *brahmahatya*.

Guruguhamōdita – the one who makes Guruguha happy.

Sudinamanē – the one who is the reason for daylight.

DivyataraSaptasvaraThīne / SaptāśvaRathīne

The chariot of Sūryahas a length of 9000 yojana - s. This chariot is driven by 7 horses namely Gāyatri, Bṛhati, Anuṣṭup, Trṣṭup, Paṅkti, Uṣnik and Jagati. So, it can be considered as Saptāśvara where aśva means horse. They represent the 7 main Chanda - s or metrics of vēda - s. These also represent the 7 svara - s of music namely Ṣadja, Rṣabha, Gāndhāra, Madhyama, Pañcama, Dhaivata and Niṣāda respectively (hence the name saptasvara). In astrology, they represent the 7 Gotra - s namely Agnivēśya, Kāśyapa, Gautama, Āngīrasa, Bhārgava, Kauśika and Vasiṣṭha respectively. In scientific terms, this can be interpreted as the 7 colours of the white light emitted from the sun – VIBGYOR.

These 7 horses together create the 'rhythm of life' in the universe.

Lyrical embellishments in the kṛti

Number of Pāda - s: 2 in Pallavi, 3 in Anupallavi, 10 in Caraṇam counting to a total of 15.

DvitiyākṣaraPrāsa:

Pallavi - Anupallavi - Madhyamakāla: SūryaMūrtte – KāryaKāraṇātmaka – ĀryaVinuta
Caraṇam - Madhyamakāla: Sārasa, Krūra, Sūri, Dhīrārccita, Saurāṣṭrārṇa, Bhāratīśa

AntyaPrāsa:

Pallavi - Anupallavi - Madhyamakāla: Sūryamurtte – Namōstutē – Chāyadhipatē–Rāśyādhipatē – Spūrttē – Kīrttē
Caraṇam - Madhyamakāla: Bhānō – Sūnō – Kṛsānō – Svabhānō; Sudinamanē – Śikhāmanē – Sākṣinē – Rathinē – Mantrātmanē – Svarūpātmanē – Hariharātmanē – Vitarāṇātmanē

Svarākṣara:

Sārasa, Sahasra, Krūrāpāpahara, Saptasvarathīne

Yamakam:

Sārasamitramitrabhānu: Even though the meaning of the word 'mitra' is the same, it is used in different contexts – sārasamitra means friend of lotus because lotus needs at least 5 to 6 hours of sunlight per day; mitrabhānu means the light which is trustworthy, meaning the Sun rises and sets on time, rises again the next day, gives heat and light every day without fail.

Selection of Rāga and tāḷa

To create the multiverse, Lord Viṣṇu broke the egg - shaped brahmāṇḍa and hence ōmkāra / praṇavamānta was heard. The first word heard was 'Bhū: '. Then 'Bhuvā: ' and 'Sva: '. Then the Sun was formed, and its bright sunlight occurred (Savita – Sun; Varēṇyam – brightness), resulting in the drying of water, out of which half of it became paste - like,

⁴Kak, Subhash C. "The astronomical code of the Rigveda." *Current science (Bangalore)* 66.4 (1994): 323-326.

⁵All India Radio, Arattupuzha Sukumaran, Sasikumar, B. Trivandrum. 'A Tribute to the Navagrahas'. 2003

⁶Kak, Subhash C. "The astronomical code of the Rigveda." *Current science (Bangalore)* 66.4 (1994).

which further hardened resulting in the formation of land or *dharaṇi*. Where there existed the egg, there is now the 'sannihita saras'. Vāmanapurāṇa says that since Sunlight was the first light to form from *ādi* or the beginning, the Sun is called 'Āditya'.

This is what is explained in the Sūryagāyatri mantra, also called Saurāṣṭra Mantra:

**‘Om Bhūrbhuvassvah Tat
Saviturvarēṇyam Bharggōdēvasya Dhīmahi Dhīyōyōnah Pra
cōdayāt’**

Also, the word 'Saurāṣṭra' is derived from ŚauraRāṣṭra meaning 'Country of Sun'. Geographically, Saurāṣṭra is a former state in West India comprising most of Kathiawar, which is part of modern Gujarat State. This region had 12 sun temples during ancient times. This could be the reason for Dīkṣita to choose the rāga Saurāṣṭram for the *kṛti*.

Similarly, Shri Lalgudi G Jayaraman, in one of his lecturedemonstrations about *kṛti* - s of the musical trinity explained a related concept of 'mitra', that of 'Dhruva', which means 'firm' and 'trust'. This paves the way to an interpretation that by 'mitra', Dīkṣita would have meant that Sūrya is someone who can be trusted and who is firm in His duties. He rises on time, sets on time – He can be 'Trusted' and provides light in the form of reflection from the moon at night. Hence, He does His roles perfectly – in other words, He is 'Firm'. This can be the main reason for Dīkṣita to choose the Tāla of this composition – 'Dhruva' tāla.

Mythological Facts about Sūrya

Lord Brahma created the 9 mānasaputra - s namely Atri, Marīci, Bhrgu, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Kardama, Aṅgīras and Vasiṣṭha to create the races of *dēva* - s, *gandharva* - s and so on. The son of Mārīci and Kala, Kāśyapa married the 13 daughters of Dakṣaprajāpati and PrasūtiDēvi. One of the daughters Aditi gave birth to Indra and other Dēva - s or Āditya - s. Another daughter Diti gave birth to daitya - s or asura - s. Aditi, who was unable to bear the tearing apart of her sister's children by envy and hatred, decided to do rigorous penance to Lord Mahāviṣṇu to get a child whose heart is unsullied by hatred, jealousy and discrimination and who dedicates himself to the betterment of the entire universe. Mahāviṣṇu appeared before her and granted her wish. This son was none other than *Sūrya Bhagavān* himself or the Sun God, who is also the right eye of Lord Viṣṇu. In other words, Sūrya is an incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu Himself. Aditi's sister Simhika found it difficult to bear the young kid's heat. He was constantly glowing too as if in a spotlight. According to Sage Nārada, it was normal for Sūrya and this heat and light are inseparable from Sūrya⁷.

Sun Temples in Varanasi and their significance concerning Sūryamūrte

Before 1192 A. D., there were fourteen sun temples in the city of Varanasi (also known as Kāśi Khaṇḍa), which were destroyed by the Mughal invasion. The fourteen temples represent the fourteen Āditya - s, which are still marked today in the form of Sun disks, lotus - shaped stones and

images set into the walls and shrines of temples. The temples were built in such a way that they form anisosceles triangle (called Āditya triangle), the centre of which was the shrine of Madhyamēśvara, the ancient centre of the city, which was also considered the axis of the cosmos. The 3 sides of the triangle represent the three cosmos, namely, macrocosmo – the celestial world (parallel to the macroscopic north), mesocosmo – water and earth (parallel to the river Ganga), and microcosmo – living beings. According to the legends of these temples, the Sun is a protective and caring deity, who gives relief from poverty, skin disease, infertility, hunger, old age and even death⁸.

The fourteen Āditya temples in Varanasi are represented as symbols now:

- 1) Uttarārka – the remover of poverty (The northernmost part of the city, which protects Varanasi from the Sun's strongest rays – attributed to the solar radiation experienced by pilgrims in the Himalayas).
- 2) Lōlārka – the Source of Fertility (Southernmost part of the city, where LōlākaṢaṣṭiis celebrated - couples bathe together to conceive a son)
- 3) Vimalāditya – Relief from leprosy and mental tension
- 4) Karṇāditya – Unlimited generosity (Mitra bhānu) – never failing in doing the duty of providing the energy needed for life on earth.
- 5) Vṛddhāditya – Relief from sufferings of old age
- 6) Draupadāditya – Remover of hunger.
- 7) Gaṅgāditya – Merging of Sun and water – depicting the connection between heaven and earth (related to the story of Bhagīratha who brought Ganga from heaven to earth).
- 8) Sambāditya – Relief from leprosy and skin diseases.
- 9) Yamāditya – Lies between Lōlārka and Uttarārka – depicts the combination of merits earned from worshipping the ancestors in the South at Rameshwaram and in the North at Manikarnika – bestower of salvation.
- 10) Mayukhāditya – The invisible Sun – Related to the total solar eclipse, where only the sunrays are visible, and the Sun disappears, and reappears after the eclipse, depicting Sūrya's victory over Rāhu – hence, the remover of poverty⁹.
- 11) Aruṇāditya – The first rays of the Sun, whose light is a combination of the 7 colours – the charioteer driving seven horses across the sky – 'saptaśvarathinē' – depicting remover of darkness or sorrow.
- 12) Khakhōlāditya or Vinitāditya – Related to sunspots – story of Kadru, the daughter of Dakṣa sending dark snakes to attack the Sun producing black spots on its visible surface.
- 13) Kēśavāditya – Vishnu's Sun – remover of sins.
- 14) Sumantvāditya – related to the sage Sumantva getting cured of leprosy.

Dīkṣita must have encountered these in the few years of his life in Varanasi. This could be another reason for the

⁸Malville, J, M & Singh, P, B. (1995). Visual Astronomy in the Mythology and Ritual of India: The Sun Temples of Varanasi. *Vistas in Astronomy*, Vol. 39, pp. 431-449. ISSN: 0083-6656(95)00004-6.

⁹Mukerji, A. B., Grover, N., & Singh, K. N. (2004). 15. In *Cultural geography, form and process: Essays in honour of prof. A.B. Mukerji*. essay, Concept Pub. Co.

⁷V, S, Rao "Navagraha Purana – Tales of the Nine Planets" Jaico Publishing House, 7th Edition, 2021. ISBN: 978-81-8495-931-4

selection of Catuśra Dhruva tāla (14 beats) for the kṛti and the lyrical mention of “Ārōkyādīphaladakīrtte”, meaning the one who blesses with good health.

2. Conclusion

Thus, the kṛti Sūryamūrte, on detailed analysis has provided many significant insights multi - dimensionally - how the lyrical embellishment or prosody is used, the word - by - word analysis of the sāhitya, how Dīkṣita might have contextually and specifically included some words, how they might have a linkage to astrology, scientific and cultural astronomy and how the Sun temples had a role in inspiring Dīkṣita to create this masterpiece. Dīkṣita's way of thought for composing a kṛti is an example for the future Vāggēyakāra - s on how to approach the same, collecting so much information and segregating them brilliantly, to create a divine form of art.

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