

A study of Archavataras in the light of epics through the compositions of Muthuswami Dikshitar



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Abstract

The Bhagavad-Gita is theoretically known as 'Smriti text'. Dhrama is the primordial word used in Bhagavad-Gita which is the law of righteousness providing guidelines for ethics, behaviors and traditions, enhancing the growth of metaphysical phenomena for spiritual transformation where our vision gets expanded towards acceptance and tolerance, merely not involved in petty fights and conflicts but towards path of devotions or any path other than devotion. When Adharma (unrighteousness actions) prevails, the custodian of this world intercedes by entering the mundane world to reinstate the Dharma. This Divine declension of God is called 'Avatar' (incarnation). This incarnation of deity which has taken the form of an idol and is seated amid the temple's sanctum sanctorum is called 'Archavatara'. Vedic scriptures recognize many such declensions of God and only the incarnations of Lord Vishnu are referred to as 'Archavatara'. Objectives: This paper enumerates various incarnations of Lord Vishnu (enlisted in Garuda Purana) through the compositions of Dikshitar. Hypothesis: Their significance and relevance of decent as discussed in Bhagavad-Gita. Conclusion: This paper also reveals Dikshitar's 'Dasya bhava' (surrender) to all forms of Gods and Goddesses encompassing his Kathenotheistic devotion which is a significant contribution to music and society.

Key Words : Kathenotheistic, Devotion, idols, Dharma, Dikshitar.

Research Paper

Introduction

Bhakti is a thorough discipline and training of the mind, a sure means to intuitive realization of God through intense love and affection for him.^[1] In Bhakti tradition, appreciation for God's beauty becomes paramount e.g, the flute of Krishna symbolizes the enchanting beauty of God ever drawing back the souls utilizing divine flute playing. The path of devotion is – surrender of the ego, the 'I', to 'God', combining this 'I' with 'God' one attains supreme bliss and gets complete satiation for the desire of love. There are various forms of schools of Bhakti; like Saivism, Vaisnavism, shakta school and Sufism, the basic idea is to achieve union with the Supreme Being. The great master pieces of Bhakti like Bhagvadgita, Vishnusahasranama, Mokshadharmaparva come in Mahabharata only. Mahābhārata talks in detail regarding Viṣṇu's devotion in Vaiṣṇavadharmaparva and Mokṣadharmaparva. The fundamental principles of Vaishnavism are found in Mahābhārata and the seed of Shaivism is also found in Mahābhārata at the beginning of Ānūsāsanikparva. Sri Krishna preaches Arjuna is to

follow the path of Bhakti Yoga the primordial means of Liberation. Bhakti Yoga is the way by which God who is the very epitome of Sat-cid-ananda (pure existence-consciousness-bliss) and Rasasvarupa (of nectarine nature) could be attained.

Bhagvad Gita: Chapter 4, verse 7 explains;

Yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata.

abhyuttānam adharmasya tadātmānam sṛjāmyaham.

Lord Krishna says to Arjuna, "Whenever there is a decline in righteousness and an increase in unrighteousness, O Arjuna, at that time I manifest myself on earth". The Supreme Consciousness exhibits his powers according to the goal he intends to accomplish during his declension while the other powers remain dormant in the Avatar (incarnations). Taking Avatar and revealing forms, names, abodes, virtues and associates, is God's way of engaging the soul in his devotion thereby strengthening the Dharma of the soul. As revealed by Ved Vyas (who is himself an Avatar) in Padma Purana (v6); "All declensions of God are replete with all Divine

powers, they are all perfect and complete". Hence we should not differentiate between one form to the other as smaller or bigger.^[2]

Literature search

Many researchers worked on the music aspect of Dikshitar and some worked on the Bhakti aspect of Dikshitar;

The author Srivatsa, described the various ragas and talas adopted by Dikshitar to create the Bhavas or emotions in connoisseurs of Carnatic music like peace and devotion being primordial feelings.^[3]

Shivashankari presents Dikshitar's 11 Kritis on the Goddess Sarasvati which describes her image and iconography of the deity-like her beauty, attributes, her relationship with other deities and geographical details of the architecture of the temple.^[4]

The author Meenal Kulkarni, emphasizes Dikshitar's Navavarana kritis which is a group of songs called Kamalāmba Navavarāṇam. The compositions are in *Sanskṛta*, the Mantras embedded in them praise the Goddess Kamalamba and explain the Śrī Yantra and various aspects of its enclosures.^[5]

Author Chandrika has done an analytical study of the musical compositions in praise of lord *Ganapati*.^[6] Author Lekshmy, in her thesis "Devi cult" gives details of female goddesses in Dikshitar's compositions with special reference to Tantric worship^[7] Many authors like Sumathi Krishnan^[8], Venkataramana Aiyar^[9], Raghavan V worked on the significance of the place Tiruvarur, details and his life as Vaggeyakara and details of Dikshitar's pilgrimage from north to south of India dedicating songs to the deities and the iconography of the temples there.^[10]

Methodology

Syntactical approach

Searching for terms like Dharma, virtues, Devotion, idol worship, faith, Upasana, Atmanivedana, Dasya (servitude) and their relation to the various incarnations of the Lord Vishnu and with other forms of Gods and Goddesses in Dikshitar's compositions, is the system adopted. Dikshitar reveals great faith or Mahavishvasa towards the various forms of Gods by using terms like 'I am protected', 'I take refuge in' and many other phrases used which reveal his kathenotheistic Bhakti (all forms of Gods are superior). Compositions under compassion show Gods and Goddesses unbiased protection and love towards the devotees.

Symantical approach

Searching for phrases in Bhakti shastras like Srimad Bhagavatam, Bhagavad Gita and others which reveal and extoll the various incarnations of Lord Vishnu. These scriptures bestows various practices and traditions followed to worship the deity descended to establish the teachings of Dharma and eradicate unrighteous actions thereby reinstating the faith and belief of the devotees in the inscriptions of the sacred scriptures like Vedas and Upanishads which extoll the attributes of Brahman too.

The educational significance of this work

In this materialistic world, the temple provides an opportunity for spiritual progression in man-kind through devotion and concentration. The bailiwick of the temple carries Divine vibrations of Vedic chanting of mantras, creating an atmosphere of sanctity and peacefulness elevating the soul to the spiritual realm. The mystic power of the idol enshrined in the temple is glorified by the archakas(priests) through the daily worships and invocations to invite and invoke the deity in the idol. Thus assuring the presence of the Super consciousness accessible to humanity through the tool of Bhakti. Dikshitar's Bhakti being impersonal to any form of God is unique and a great example to move to higher realms of spirituality known as 'Nirguna Upasana' i.e, worshipping and meditating on the formless and attributeless Brahman which helped him attain 'Videha mukti'.

What are Avatars?

The word Avatar means 'The one who descends and has its root word in Sanskrit as 'Avatarati'. The concept of Avatar in Hinduism is often associated with Lord Vishnu, the preserver aspect of God.

Bhagavad Gita in Chapter 4, verse 8 describes the relevance of descend;

Paritrāṇāya sādḥūnām vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām |

dharmā saṁsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge ||

'Lord Krishna assured the three reasons for declension to the earth they are; to protect the righteous, to annihilate the wicked and to re-establish the principles of Dharma, I appear on this earth, age after age.'^[11] The decent of the Supreme Consciousness personified in a body made of earthly material is pure intelligence, compassion where the spiritual energy of the consciousness has penetrated in the ambit of space and time. The incarnation of a deity in human, animal, or idol form is to neutralize the effects of evil in the world.

Shrimad Bhagavatam summarizes teachings on such descents (10.51.36, v5);

**Janma karmābhīdhānāni santi ménga sahasraśaḥ |
na śakyante nusankhyātum anantatvān mayāpi hi ||**

This means, “We cannot count the total Avatars or forms of God since the beginning of eternity.”^[12]

The Avatars are classified into four groups;

1. Aveshavatar–God exhibits his unique powers through a jivatma (individual soul) and acts through him for which sage Narada and Buddha are the best examples.
2. Prabhavavatar–the God declension is in a personal form displaying his Divine powers which are of two types;
 - (a) God discloses himself for a few moments in which he completes his task and leaves. Gods were present before kumaras cleared their doubts by answering their questions and left.
 - (b) Their existence on the earth is for many years where they finish a task like writing and compiling sacred scriptures which Veda Vyas did, who is a very good example of this incarnation.
3. Vaibhavatar–when God’s declension is in his Divine form and exhibits more of Divine powers like the Dashavatar’s of Lord Vishnu is the best example of the incarnation.
4. Paravasthavatar–the God exhibits his Divine powers through his Divine form like Lord Krishna, Lord Rama.^[13]

Ramanuja (11th century AD), who was well known as the founder of Sri Vaishnava sampradaya is a spiritual leader in the system of ‘Pancharatra’. This system had the philosophy of worship of Narayana, Parabrahman, which described paths for humans to interact with the Divine as enlisted below;

Para- invisible, Brahman. This unchanging form of Lord Vishnu arouses bliss among the devotees.

Vyuha- invisible and transient in his form. The iconography of Lord Vishnu is seen as reclining ‘Shesha’ the five-headed serpent floating on an ocean of milk.

Vibhava- Various incarnations (Dashavataras) like Rama, Krishna and holy men like Vyasa.

Antaryamin-whose presence can be felt but not directly perceptible as he resides in the hearts of humans.

Archa-visible form and glorified in temples.

The nature and scope of Archavatara

Worshipping Para, Vyuha, Vibhava, Antaryamin can only be done through meditation and beyond reach so Archavatar only suits the devotees as it is the manifestation of the deity. Archavatara is a synonymous word for an idol, Vighram (idol worshipped in temples made of stone, rock, or special material like panchaloha which is a mixture of 5 metals). God desires to be accessible to the common man so he manifests himself into an image that is made of earthly material, a pleasing face and beautiful eyes. The Archavataras have the complete attributes of auspiciousness like mastership, motherly love, accessibility and excellent personality that prevents fear in devotees.^[14]

The idols in temples can be distinguished under two heads based on their functions; the idol is seated in the ‘Garbha gudi’ (inner chamber) of the temple which is the ‘Mula Virat’ or the main deity which is adorned with ornaments and flowers, is immovable. A smaller image of the deity known as ‘Utsava murti’ means the image used for processions during festivals or on special occasions and various celebrations.^[15]

As explained in Srimad Bhagavatam, 5.5.19;

**Idam śarīram mama durvibhāvyaṁ |
sattvaṁ hi me hṛdayaṁ yatra dharmāḥ |
pṛṣṭhe kṛto me yad adharmā ārād |
ato hi ṛṣabhaṁ prāhur āryāḥ.**

“My transcendental cosmic body, sat-cid-ananda-vighraha, looks like a human form, but it is not a material human body. It is inconceivable. I am not forced by nature to accept a particular type of body; I take on a material body by my own sweet will. My heart is also spiritual, and I always think of the welfare of devotees. Therefore within my heart can be found the process of devotional service, which is meant for the devotees. Far from my heart have I abandoned irreligion or adharmā and non-devotional activities. They do not appeal to me. Due to all these transcendental qualities, people generally pray to me as ‘Rṣabhādeva’, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the best of all living entities.”^[16]

Saligrama

The form of Lord Vishnu commonly worshipped at homes and temples is ‘Saligrama’ found in Himalayan mountains and formed out of fossils from the remains of fish. It is believed and certified that these river stones are a testimony of the presence of Lord Vishnu. A silver casket is designed like the ‘Adishesha’ serpent as a bed

for Lord Vishnu seated in the sacred precincts of the home. Strict observations and rituals have to be followed when worshipping 'Saligram'.

Consecration of the idol

The God in idol form allows the devotees to serve him through various rituals like Yagna (ritual sacrifice with an objective), puja (an act of worship) after the ceremony called 'Prana Prathista', the ritual of invoking the power of deity or life-breath into the idol by Vedic chanting of mantras with the accompaniment of musical instruments like Nadasvara, Dolu and others following the traditional rituals of the temple by priests of Higher stature. The other traditional 16 step puja known as 'Shodashopachara' usually performed towards the 'Ishta Devatal (favorite God) like cleaning the place of worship, lighting the deepam (lamp lit with oil), adorning the lord with flowers and scents, grinding the sandal paste, offering foods like fruits and other cooked foods called as Naivedya, singing hymns praising the God in a congregation (Bhajana sampradaya) and others. The sacred scriptures like Vedas, smritis and Puranas describe elaborately the various steps to invoke the blessings of the descended deity.

Bhagavad Gita discusses the compassion of God in chapter 9.26; by discussing the steps of simple worship that please the lord i.e, even a leaf or flower or fruit or water offered with unconditional love and Bhakti is sufficient to God. Through these rituals, God helps humans to burn the seeds of sanskaras and kleshas thereby putting an end to suffering and pain as the mind is away from unrighteous actions meditating on God^[17]

Dikshitar's contribution to Carnatic music and society

Dikshitar's birthplace was Tiruvarur famous for its magnificent temples with various deities seated in its sanctum sanctorum like Tygaraja, Kamalamba, Mahaganapati, with their rituals, festivals and processions, chariots, musical instruments like Nāgaswaram, the famous Shuddha maddalam and Pancharāgama vadyam.

Chinnaswāmi, brother of Dikshitar suddenly lost his vision. Since Rāmasvāmi Dikshitar was proficient in musicology composed a song and a Ragamalika comprising of 48 ragas worshipping Lord Venkateshvara when the family visited the lord of seven hills at Tirupati. As blessings from the lord, Chinnaswāmi's eyesight was restored. Such instances might have influenced

Dikshitar to compose songs on the deities as they provide protection and Moksha to him. Cidambaranātha Yogin was a spiritual master, a great Siddha, a Vedāntin and Guru of Rāmasvāmi Dikshitar (Dikshitar's father), spotted the requisite potential in Dikshitar and took him as his disciple. The Yogin took Dikshitar on a pilgrimage to Kāśī for six years and under his guidance taught him a life of self-discipline, a sense of equanimity, Vairāgya (detachment) which developed a yearning and clairvoyant wisdom for exploring various matters concerning the spiritual realm.

The predecessors of Dikshitar known as 'Dikshitar Pentad' (the group of five generations) made rich, numerous and varied contributions to the golden age of Carnatic music who were highly devoted to Devi and so were inducted to the mantra Dikṣā, got initiated into 'Sri Vidya Upasana' and had immense knowledge of the ancient scriptures like Vedas and music.

Dikshitar has written many compositions on the incarnations of Lord Vishnu, e.g., Dikshitar dedicated 1 song for the famous temple of Lord Satyanārāyana at Badrinath in Uttarakhand, Kṛṣṇa temple at Guruvayur and others, which elaborates the relevance of their decent, the various forms, their beauty, place of declension and their compassion towards the sufferings of the devotees. some are discussed below;

Daśavatāra rāgamālika

Mādhavo māmpātu matsyāvatāro vedasteya duṣṭaro vedādi rakṣaṇaḥ

Let lord Madhava protect me. He took the incarnation of a giant fish and destroyed the wicked demon, who stole the Vedas and he restored the Vedas to their glory (469-1st).

govindaṁ namāmyahaṁ guruguhanutakūrmāvatāraṁ devarājādi pūjitaṁ divyāmṛtapradam

I salute Govinda, adored by Guruguha. He took the incarnation as a tortoise worshipped by Indra and others and he gave the Divine nectar to the celestials (469-2nd).

Śrīdhareṇa rakṣitoḥaṁ bhūmipāla sūkareṇa hita devopakāreṇa hayāsur hati nipuṇena

I am protected by Sridhara, who manifested as a wild boar and protected the mother earth, rendered help to the celestials and skilfully destroyed Hayasura (469-3rd).

Narasimhāya namaste prahlāda prārthitāya hiraṇyaprāṇaharāya harihayādi vanditāya

I Worship Lord Narasimha, who took the incarnation of Man-Lion at the request of Prahlada; he destroyed the

life of Hiranya and is adored by Indra and others (469-4th).

***vāmanādanyaṁ na jānehaṁ naravararupiṇaḥ śukra
balirājādi śrutijñāna prabodhino***

I do not know any other God than Vamana, as the best among men expounded the knowledge of Vedas to Shukra and king Bali (469-5th).

***Paraśurāmasya dāsohaṁ sītāpatim śaraṅgatasya
kṣatriyakula bhīkarasya jamadagniṣiputrasya***

I am the servant of Parashurama, who took refuge in Lord Rama and Sita (spouse). He, the son of sage Jamadagni struck terror to the Kshatriya kings (469-6th).

***Rāmacandrasvāmini bhaktim karomi daśaratha
kumārātmani daśavadana bhañjanātmani***

I offer my devotion to Lord Rama, the dear son of Dasharatha. He put down the ten-headed Ravana (469-7th).

***Balarāma mām kalaya bhogīsādi sodara
muraṅgānānanda mukundādi sadālola***

Remember me Oh Balarama, brother of Krishna, reclining on the serpent couch, you are delighted by the music of the flute and the company of sportive Mukunda (469-8th).

***Śrīkrṣṇaṁ bhajare citta śrīrukmiṇīpatim
śiśupāl kaṁsādiharaṁ pāṇḍavādi rakṣitavaraṁ***

Oh mind! worship Shri Krishna, the lord of Rukmini. He destroyed Shishupala, Kamsa and protected the Pandavas and others (469-9th).

***Kaliyuga varaveṅkaṭeśaṁ khalasamūha hata sureśaṁ
alamelu maṅgeśaṁ acyutādi bhajehamaniśaṁ***

I constantly meditate on Lord Venkatesha the great one who bestows boons in Kaliyuga, the lord of Alamelumanga. He is the lord of the celestials and destroyed a host of wicked people (469-10th). [18]

***Pannagaśayana padmanābha paripālaya mām
paṅkajanābha unnatapāṇḍya keraḷanivāsa
śrīnivāsa cidānandavilāsa pāyasānnapriya
śrīkara paraśurāmakṣetrabhākara
paramabhaktaprahādādi vinuta prasidhdaguruguha
hitopadeśa māyāṭita mandaragiridhara karadhṛta
śaṅkhacragadādi dhara toyajādi saṁsevita
dāmodara dayākara varadakara***

Oh, Lord Padmanabha! Who rests on the snake for couch and sports a lotus in his navel, please protect me.

He is Lord Srinivasa who sports Lakshmi on his chest. He is enshrined in the hallowed precincts of Pandya & Kerala and pervades as the supreme knowledge and bliss- Chidananda. He enjoys the rice cooked with milk & sugar-Payasanna. He is the bestower of prosperity and makes the Parashurama Kshetra-Kerala- glorious. He is worshipped by the supreme devotee Prahlada and others and is kindly disposed towards Guruguha. He transcends the illusion-Maya and held the Mandara mountain aloft. He sports the conch, discus, mace, etc. in his hands. He is Damodara worshipped by Brahma and others. He is the compassionate and the benevolent lord (165-P, AP, C)(pallavi, anupallavi, charanam).

This composition shows Dikshitar's complete faith and surrenders himself for protection and Moksha (Self-realization). This type of Sharanagati (surrender) where the devotee has unshakeable faith in the lord is called 'Rakshisyatiti Vishvaso'.

***veṅkaṭācalapate ninnu nammiti vegamenannu
rakṣiyumayya***

***paṅkajāsanapramukhādivinuta
padamunāśrayiñcinavākella***

***saṅkaṭamuludīrccisampadalicci maṅgaḷamporundiya
pulivalattil viḷaṅguṁ***

***śrīnivasa śeṣācalamuniñci śīghramāy vandu
andunikabhīṣṭa***

***dānamosagi gokarṇakṣetramulo nelakoni
mṛkaṇḍumunikaḷmuda***

***lāna bhaktānām abhayavarapradāna caturatara
ramāpate dayānidhe pratyakṣamugānanda mānilattil
nin mahimai anekam vānavar vaṅaṅguṁ vāsudevane
vāñchitārthaphalamiccū varadane dīnarakṣakā
pītāambaradharā deva devaguruguhan māmanāna***

O lord Venkatachalapate! I believed in you, please protect me without delay. Whose feet are worshipped by Brahma and other distinguished celestials and your feet are capable of removing the sorrows of all those who take refuge in them and bring prosperity. The lord is enshrined in the auspicious Pulivalam shrine. O, Lord Srinivasa! you come once from Sheshachala to grat desired boon and took residence in Gokarna kshetra. O Ramapate! You are skillful in offering security and boons to devotees and ascetics like Mrikandu. In this world your glory is infinite. O Vasudeva! You are worshipped by celestials, you are the bestower of boons, protector of the afflicted, adorned with yellow silk and you are the uncle of Guruguha (158-P, AP, C).

Śaṅkhacragadāpānimahaṁ vande śrī śārṅga nandaka
kaustubhadhāriṇaṁ vande

*pañkeruha caraṇam padmāvātīramaṇam
saṅkaṭāpaharaṇam sadā bhakta bharaṇam
kaṅkum paṅkilagātram paṅkajaviśālanetraṁ
saṅkarasannutipātram veṅkaṭavarakṣetraṁ
gajendrasaṁrakṣaṇam garudavāha vicakṣaṇam
ajendrādi vilakṣaṇam amrutasārabhakṣaṇam
ajāmīlaprabhṛtyaneka dāsāli santaraṇam bhaje
pūrṇacandrikāṅga guruguhāntaḥkaraṇam
kujādīgrahavihitam virajānadītaṭasthitam
sajātīyādirahitam nijānandabodhahitam*

I offer my obeisance to Lord Vishnu who bears the conch, the discus, the mace in his hands, and the one who possesses the sharanga-bow, Nandaka the sword and adorns the Kaustubha gem on his chest. He, the beloved Lord of Padmavati has lotus-like feet. He is the remover of difficulties and protector of his devotees. His form is smeared with Kunkuma and has broad eyes like lotus petals. He is extolled by Lord Shiva and resides in Venkatavarada kshetra. He the protector of Gajendra has Garuda as the vehicle and is realized by Brahma, Indra, and others. He has drunk the essence of the nectar-Amrita. He has protected a good number of devotees like Ajamila. He is the inner self of Guruguha who is radiant like the full moonlight. He annuls the malefic effect of the planet like Mars. Resides on the banks of the river Viraja. He is the supreme one without a second among celestials. He imparts supreme bliss and kindness (347-P, AP, C).

*Veṅkaṭeṣa yādava bhūpatimāśrayēham viśva
vikalpāpahaṁ
vidvajjanakalpabhūruhaṁ vadanasarasīruhaṁ
kaṅkaśaila madhyasthita kārṭikeya śivaguruguha
karuṇākaṭākṣapātram kaṅjadalāyata netraṁ
kaṅkaṇa hāra kirīṭālaṅkṛta sundara gātram
kāñcana vṛṣṭiprada megharañjita bahukṣetraṁ
pañkajabhavamukha surakṛta sakaḷa niṣkaḷa stotraṁ
saṅkalpa vikalparahita saccidanandamātram*

I take refuge in Lord Venkatesha, who is the king of Yadavas. Who removes the ignorance of the universe and is the kalpataru for the learned. His feet resemble that of a lotus. Abiding amid Kankashaila-Kazhukumalai (Tamil). He is the beneficiary of the compassionate glance of Guruguha the son of Krittika and Shiva. His eyes resemble the lotus and his form is adorned with a bracelet, necklace and Kirita-crown. He presides over many holy places where the clouds shower in gold. His face is like lotus and his Manifested and unmanifested form is acclaimed by the Deva. He is of the form of Sacchidananda and is beyond dualities (66-P, AP, C).^[19]

Dāsya

In Bhagavad-Gita chap 18, verse 62 says,

*Tameva śaraṇam gaccha sarva bhāvena bhārata
tatprasādātparām śāntiṁ prāpsyasi śāśvatam*

‘Surrender exclusively unto him with your whole being, O Bharat, by his grace, you will attain perfect peace and the eternal abode.

Shri Krishna also stated in verse 7.14 of the Bhagavad-Gita: “My divine energy Maya, consisting of the three modes of nature, is very difficult to overcome. But those who surrender unto me cross over it easily”.

Devotion or Surrender to the Divine is vital in Yoga too. Patanjali Yoga sutra says,

Ēṣvarapraēdhānād vā

Yoga gets accomplished through the surrender to the Divine (1.23)^[20]

Samādhisiddhirēṣvarapraēdhānāt

From surrender to the Divine comes the perfection of *Samādhi*, the highest goal of yoga (2.45).

Hatha Yoga Pradipika begins with an offering of reverence to Shiva as the source of yogic knowledge which is the first step to the pinnacle of *Rāja* Yoga. Yoga *Yājñāvalkyā* (9.12-44) describes the importance of developing the practice of meditation on the deity to achieve union with the *Paramātman* (Supreme Self) to achieve *Mokṣa* (liberation).

Servitude

Dāsya is service to the Divine. For Dikshitar, all forms of Gods are superior. Hanumān is one of the best examples of Dāsya. Dikshitar expresses servitude to the Divine in many songs.

Nīlotpalāmbikā yāstava dāsoham

Oh, Śrī Nīlotpalāmbā! I am your servant (42-P).

Paraśurāmasya dāsoham

I am the servant of Paraśurāma (469-6th stanza).

Śrī guruguhasya dāsoham

I am humble servant of Guruguha (76-P).

Madhurāmbāyāstavadāsoham

Oh, Goddess Madhurāmbā! I am your humble servant (319-P).

Śṛṅgāra śaṅgyāyudhadharśaravaṅsyadāsohamaniśam

I am always the humble servant of lord Śaravaṇa (398-P).

Rāmacandrasya dāsoham

I am the humble servant of Rāmacandra (421-P).

Ambikāyāḥ abhayāmbikāyāḥ tavadāsoham

Oh Goddess Abhayāmbikā, I surrender to you (335-P).

Dhīruḍaina guruguhadāsudani

I am the servant of the heroic Guruguha (399-C).

Ātmanivedana

Ātmanivedana is to surrender completely without any trace of arrogance or ego. Here the devotee loses himself and has no personal and independent existence. God takes care of him and god treats him as himself. He gains the true knowledge of himself when he is filled with the devotion of God where the devotee and the lord become one. It is only in this devotion the feeling of oneness with the lord is achieved. This type of impersonal devotion to various forms of Gods is dealt in abundant throughout Dikshitar's literature. Parvati, Lakshmi and Saraswati are worshipped as Devi Avataras. Somaskanda and Nataraja are the forms so lord Shiva. Shadanana is the other name for Kartikeya son of shiva. Venkatesha and Buddha are the forms of Lord Vishnu.

Kamalāmbike āśrita kalpalatike

Kamalāmbika! You are the *Kalpaka* tree to those who seek refuge in you (14-P).

Sadāśraye Abhayāmbike sannidhehi

I joyously seek refuge in you O *Abhayāmbika* (411-P).

Vīṅṅapustaka dhāriṅṅimāśraye

I seek the blessings of Goddess *Sarasvatī* (97-P)

Somātmakamāśritakalpabhūruham

He is the *Kalpaka* tree to his dependants (304-2nd line).

Cidambaranāṭarājamāśrayeham

I find refuge in *Cidambara Nāṭarāja* (337-P).

Veṅkaṭeśayādava bhūpatimāśrēham

I take refuge in lord *Veṅkaṭeśa* (66-P).

Somāskandaṁ svānandakandaṁ āśrayāmi

I take refuge in the blissful lord *Somāskanda*(305-2nd line).

Buddhamāśrayāmi satataṁ

I always seek shelter in *Buddha* (248-P).

Ṣaḍānane sakalam arpayāmi

I offer everything at the feet of the *Ṣaḍānana* (232-P).

Great Faith

In *Ātmanivedana* or *Śaranāgati Mahāviśvāsa* or great faith is extremely important. The phrases used 'I am protected' or 'Please protect me' show his ultimate faith which is expressed throughout *Dīkṣitar*'s compositions.

Nīlotpalāmbikayā sukhapradayā rakṣitoḥam

I am protected by *Nīlotpalāmbikā* (157-P).

Rāmacandreṇa samrakṣitoḥam

I am protected by lord *Rāmacandra* (130-P).

Śrī Pārthasārathinā pālitosmyahaṁ sadā

I am protected by lord the charioteer of Arjuna (189-P).

Śrī Kamalāmbikayā kaṭākṣitoḥam

Śrī *Kamalāmbikā* has cast her gracious glance on me now (293-P).

Vākara śetakiraṇa pāvakādi vikāsakarayā bhīkara tā patrayādibhedanadhurīṅṅatarayā|**Pākaripupramukhādīprārthitasukaḷebarayā prākāṭyaparāparayā pālītodayākarayā||**

I am protected by her who makes the sun, the moon and the fire manifest themselves, who is skillful in removing the tree terrible sufferings, who possesses the beautiful form assumed to grant the prayers of *Indra* and the other gods, who manifests both as the supreme and as empirical objects and who is compassionate (106-AP).

Māmava kalyāṅṅaguṅṅasālinī

Oh, mother! Repository of all auspicious virtues! Please protect me (65-P).

Māmavapaṭṭābhīrāma jaya

Oh, *Paṭṭābhīrāma!* Please protect me (167-P).

Jambūpate mām pāhi nijānandāmṛtabodhaṁ dehi

Oh, *Jambūpati!* Protect me blessing me with the awakening in the elixir of blissful self (454-P).

Maṅḅaladevatayā tvayā bahumānitoḥam

I have been honored by you *Maṅḅaladevatā* (23-P).

Compassion

Compassion is an important aspect of Bhakti. The greatness of Bhakti literature is that it not only deals with God's compassion to the composer alone but also describes God's compassion to all, especially to the poor, fallen in misery. This can further make the devotees reflect the same quality. This is the greatness of Bhakti Yoga. *Dīkṣitar* extolled many Gods as being compassionate and unbiased to *Dīnas* (poor), afflicted,

Depressed, dejected, helpless and describes how gods serve the poor, guard and uplift them. The compositions below show the auspicious attributes of God;

Kaumārī gaurīvelāvalī gānalole suṣṭile bāle

Oh, the youthful *Kaumārī!* is the paragon of virtues (192-P).

Dhanañjayasārathe dayānidhe kṛpām kuru

Charioteer of *Arjunā*, ocean of compassion, shower on me your mercy (220-C).

Ekāmrapate karuṇāmūrte ekāneka vibhūte

Oh lord, *Ekāmranātha!* The embodiment of mercy (298-2nd line).

Ambā nīlāyatākṣi karuṇākāṭākṣi

Oh mother *Nīlāyatākṣi*, eyes full of compassion, shower your blessings on me (343-P).

Dīnavana koṅkaṇeśa

Protector of the afflicted (12-C).

Balarāma mām kalaya

Remember me oh *Balarāma* (469-8th stanza).

Compassion is to make the soul transcend the *Samsāra*. The sthala Purana of Kasi states that Lord Shiva whispers the Rama mantra in the ears of all those who breathe their last in this sacred place;

Vināyaka vighnanāśaka mām tāraya dayānidhe

Oh lord, *Vināyaka!* Ocean of mercy! Make me transcend (96-P).

Kṛpām kuru keśava śaurehare

Oh *Kṛṣṇa!* Be merciful (49-P).

Dīnajanasaṁrakṣaṇa nipuṇakanakadhāre

She is an expert in protecting the afflicted (142-C).

Dīnāvanahastasārāse

Whose lotus hands offer protection to the afflicted (13-AP).

Dīnāvanodyukta

He is the Divine *Kalpaka vṛkṣa* for the afflicted ones (43-AP).

Dāśarathe Dīnadayānidhe

The compassionate one to the afflicted (267-1st line).

Dīnajanāvana śaṅkari

The protector of the dejected ones (433-C).

Dīnabandho dayāsandho

Oh, *Rāma!* The friend of the dejected ones (268-1st line).

Dīmārtti bhañjanāya

Removes sufferings of the poor (255-C).

Dīnajanāvana śaṅkara

lord Śaṅkara! Who protects the supplicants (170-C).

Dhīrāgragaṇya dīnaśaraṇya

The refuge for the depressed (85-AP).

Dīnajanābhṣṭadāyini

Who fulfills the desires of the depressed ones (154-P).

Anātha rakṣaka

Oh! The protector of the helpless (96-AP).

Daityahantrī dīnarakṣiṇī

The protector of the oppressed ones (216-AP).

Pāhimāmdīnabandho

He is the friend of distressed ones(280-3rd line).

Ābālagopaviditadīnaśaraṇya

He is the protector of the Dejected ones (326-AP).

The song below shows Gods grace for devotees who are blessed with children;

Putrakāraka dīnabandho

You grant progeny. You are the friend of the Helpless (204-C).

The compositions depict Gods grace in curing ailments that are complicated and severe like Leprosy and others;

Kuṣṭharogāpaha gartatīrtha śambho

Cures the people afflicted with Leprosy (235-C).

Vikalparogavaidyanipuṇena

He is an expert in curing complicated ailments (358-C).

Rogaharam

He cures diseases (400-AP)[²¹]

Conclusion

The beauty and glory of Archavataras are that though the lord is almighty and clairvoyant, he seems ignorant, though he is omnipotent he seems to be powerless, though he is the protector seems to be the protected one, though seems the lord is not accessible, he is graciously present in all temples and homes. For the devotee with unconditional love and faith, the temple and the ‘Archa’ are superior to heaven. The ‘Archa’ has attributes that make the humans take refuge in the lord, functions both as means and as an end. Temples create unity and link India through a gathering of the huge crowd carrying

love and faith for that image seated amid sanctum in the heart of the devotee. Dikshitar's commendable work with the essence of Bhakti and *Jñāna*, had a heart of Yogin with an attitude of Bhakta, reflected in his compositions.

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