

Sri Vidya: Navavaranas in the Navama Avarana

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Abstract

In this article, the masterpiece of Dikshitar and by extension all of Carnatic Music, namely the ninth Avarana Krithi of Sri Yantra worship in Aahiri Ragam is discussed in detail, diving deep into its philosophical and spiritual significance. The song is understood to the philosophies of all the nine Avaranas into a single composition, merging seamlessly the Vibhaktis, Yoginis, Avarana concepts and Devatas. Thus, it is concluded that this song is a pinnacle of Muthuswami Dikshitar, of Carnatic Music, of Navavarana Concept and of Sri Vidya itself, extolling Kamalambal by viewing the Mother Lalitha as the very Sat-Chit-Aanandam Parabrahman.

Introduction

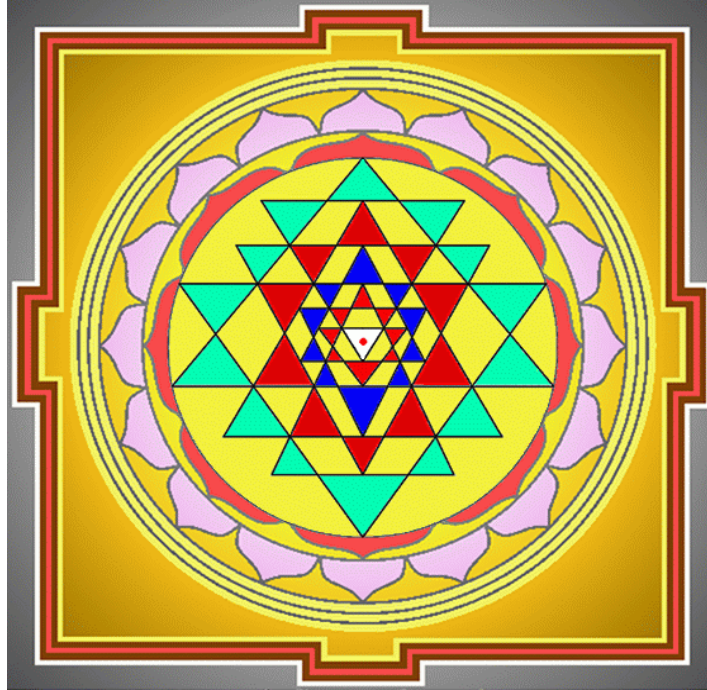
Indian Spirituality is known for its vastness both in diversity and depth. It boasts of an unparalleled variety of deities, customs and traditions. However, the central theme and the single final destination of all this variety, is the single Parabrahman – the Absolute, seen as the boundless, infinite Self beyond all differences and forms, and which can only be described as the Real Truth (Sat), Fundamental Consciousness (Chit) and Unalloyed Bliss (Aanandam).

Then, the variety of traditions offered by Indian Spirituality is all about celebrating different aspects of this Parabrahman as the means towards reaching it. Such is the basis of honoring deities as Ganapathi, Shiva, Shakti, Vishnu, Skanda and Surya – collectively known as the “Shanmatha”, using these concepts to completely quieten down the fluctuations of the mind and reach a one-pointed focus of divine love and devotion, known as Bhakti.

Within each system, while honoring each of these deities as the Supreme Parabrahman, there always comes a certain stage where the respective deity is viewed as the very source of creation from which everything, the universe as we know it, springs into existence. Whether aware or not, at this stage, the worshipper worships the deity in the aspect of the Mother, since it is always the Mother which is the source of creation.

However, there is one tradition which honors the Parabrahman directly in the form of the Mother and all customs of this tradition completely revolve around this central theme. This tradition simply goes by the name of ‘Sri-Vidya’ or the ‘Honored Wisdom’. The Mother is simply known as ‘Lalitha’ or ‘She who plays’. Such a general name is testimony to the universality of this tradition, and understandably, this is the single most profound, deep, esoteric, secretive and powerful tradition among the vastness of Indian Spirituality.

With the aim of Sri Vidya being to understand the various aspects of the universe in all their subtleties, finally leading to the Mother, the central concept of Sri Vidya is the Sri Yantra, a complex geometrical pattern of interlocking triangles. This pattern is best understood as a series of nine enclosures (Nava Avaranas), from the outer periphery to the centre, each one consisting of a set of triangles or petals, and each one subtler than the previous.



This way of viewing (Krama) the Sri Yantra is known as the Samhaara Krama, which in essence is the journey from the Creation to the Creator. In each stage, one aspect of the universe is seen and understood – both as the creation of the Mother, as well as in its limited capacity in being only a creation. Thus understood, the worshipped (Upasaka or Sadhaka) ‘kills’ or transcends that level of existence (Samhaara), and moves to the next, subtler level. This is done for nine levels, with the ninth itself being the Mother, and the final destination as Sat-Chit-Anandam Parabrahman.

With the tradition of Sri Vidya being this esoteric, Muthuswamy Dikshitar, foremost among the trinity of Carnatic Music, has been the one chosen instrument of the Mother, who through blissful music, has made this tradition accessible to one and all. This has been achieved through nine of his compositions, called the Navavarana Krithis, each one extolling the respective Avarana, without compromising on the philosophical depth or on the Shruti-Laya-Sahitya standards of music.

Preceded by a Dhyaana (Invocation), and culminating with a Mangalam (Auspiciousness), these Krithis are on praise of the Goddess Kamalambal of Tiruvarur, the foremost of Kshetras, where every deity (Uchchishta Ganapathi, Guruguha Skanda, Somaskanda Shiva, Kamalambal, Srividya Rajagopala) is seen as an aspect of Srividya. This Kshetra is rightly the capital of Sri Vidya, and is simply known as “Srinagara” or “Sripura”.



The pinnacle of these Navavarana Krithis and the philosophy contained therein, and thus of all Dikshitar Krithis, is the ninth Avarana Krithi, Sri Kamalamba Jayati in Aahiri Raagam, a melody that serves well to bring one to a contemplative, meditative and spiritual mood. This Krithi extols Kamalambika in the Bindu, which is the centre point of the Sri Yantra, and hence the Parabrahman.

A Krithi truly like no other, this composition can be understood in nine sections, within which Dikshitar has dexterously interwoven

1. Yoginis (Philosophies) of the nine Avaranas, all in relation with the Mother
2. Aspects of the nine Avaranas in the universe, best highlighted in the Bhavana Upanishad.
3. The central theme of the deities (Devatas) in each Avarana, with the list of deities as given in Khadgamala Sahasraakshara Vidya.
4. The various systems of philosophies (Darshanaangis) in the Avaranas.
5. The Eight Vibhaktis or Grammatical endings, falling perfectly in line with the Avaranas.
6. Nine forms of the Goddess corresponding to the nine Avaranas.

This masterpiece is a remarkable condensation of all the Navavarana Krithis, and by extension the entire philosophy of Sri Vidya. The nine Avaranas are structured as follows:

1. The Pallavi of the song contains the first Avarana known as Bhoopura, seen in Sri Chakra as White, Yellow and Red border lines.
2. The Second and Third Avaranas, seen as pink and red petalled enclosures, form the Anupallavi of

the song, with the Third Avarana in fast pace (Madhyamakala).

3. The fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh Avaranas, seen as concentric enclosures of green, crimson, blue and red colored groups of triangles, form the Charanam in their respective Vibhaktis.
4. The eighth Avarana, seen distinctly as the white central triangle forms the Charana Madhyamakala.
5. The ninth Avarana, the central Bindu, is seen in the Madhyamakala of the Pallavi – a musical feature very rare to come by, even in Dikshitar's songs.

The following details the nine sections through the nine Avaranas.

1. Trailokya Mohana Chakra

The opening lines of this song correspond to the Dhyana (meditation or invocation).

Sri Kamalaambaa Jayati – Ambaa – Jagadambaa

(Sri Kamalamba is always victorious. She is the Mother, the Universal Mother)

The keyword here is ***Jagadambaa*** and the form is Kamalambal Herself. The representation here is simply as the Mother (Amba) of the entire Universe (Jagad). Since this represents the pinnacle of all traditions of Indian Spirituality, and the direct visualization of Parabrahman as the source (Mother), no other description is required for Dhyana.

The next lines (Pallavi) correspond to the first Avarana:

Shringaara Rasa Kadambaa Madambaa - Chidbimbaa Pratibimbendu Bimbaa

(Kamalamba is the epitome of Shringaara Rasa, the king of emotions. She is the Radiance of Consciousness, ChidBimba, as well as the Radiance arising out of the reflection of Consciousness.)

The name of the first Avarana is Trailokya Mohana, translating to 'Fascinator of the Three Worlds'. In the Sri Yantra above, this is the outermost enclosure, seen as White, Yellow and Red border lines. The three lines represent the three groups of Goddesses namely Siddhis (Powers), Maatrukas (Little Mothers) and Mudras (Gestures).

Looking deep into the name of this Avarana, one understands that the Mohana (fascination) is nothing but the spell of enjoyment or pleasure-pain duality that keeps the world running. In other words, this Mohana is Variety, since Variety is the Spice of Life. Within this context, an understanding the representation of the three groups of Goddesses in the Bhavana Upanishad reveals the following:

1. The Siddhis are seen as the Navarasas (emotions) in Bhavana Upanishad. Corresponding to the world of humans (Martya Loka), these nine emotions form the liveliness and the rich tapestry of life, and it is solely on account of these emotions that various activities are performed, both at the individual and societal level. These activities induce a sense of doership, which is translated as Rajasa Guna (Mode of Activity).
2. The Matrukas are seen as the eight Afflictions (Kama, Krodha, Lobha, Moha, Madha, Matsarya, Punya and Paapa). These are the same as the emotions, but channelized into the wrong directions, through dominance of the Ego (Ahankara). According to Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita, these afflictions turn a person away from the qualities of truth and Self-Realization, and thus are termed Tamasa Guna (Mode of Ignorance). Thus, this corresponds to the world of demons and

Daityas (Paathaala Loka), and it is through these afflictions that the demons carry out their tasks of destruction.

3. The Mudras are seen to represent the Chakras of the Kundalini Yoga. In other words, these represent various levels of elevation, in which, varying upon the level of consciousness, the universe is perceived in different ways. Listed as going from Bhoo-Loka all the way to Satya-Loka, these 'worlds' are described as the abodes of various Gods (Devas), each one representing various aspects of nature such as wind, water, fire etc. Since these world-views direct a worshipper towards the Highest Truth (Sat or Satya), these are said to be in Sattva Guna (Mode of Purity). This then corresponds to the world of Gods (Svarga Loka).

Thus, the Trailokya Mohana, or the fascinators of the Three Worlds are nothing but these groups of emotions, afflictions and world-views. Central among the three world is the Martya Loka filled with emotions, and the King of these emotions is the emotion called 'Love' (Shringaara Rasa).

Thus, the keyword of this section is *Shringaara Rasa Kadamba*, which summarizes all the fascinators of the three worlds, seen as the first Avarana. In reality, these fascinations are nothing but distortions of the fundamental consciousness (Chit) creating false differences just as a pond with ripples gives a very distorted reflection of the full moon (Prati Bimba-Indu Bimba).

The representation here is that of the Lord as Krishna enacting the three Gunas in the world through puppetry. The use of the First Vibhakti ('Nominative') emphasizes the active voice, or the sense of Deorship. The Manifest (Prakata) Yogini represents the visible form of the emotions and afflictions.

Understanding the nature of impermanence of the desires and emotions forms the bedrock of the Buddha's teachings, leading to Vairaagya (dispassion). Thus this part is known as Bauddha Darshanaangi.



SHRIVIDYA RAJAGOPAALA

2. Sarva Aasha Paripooraka Chakra

The sixteen petals of the Second Avarana form the residence of the group of sixteen Goddesses known as the 'Aakarshana Shaktis' (Attractors). These are representations of the regulations of various aspects and organs of the body and mind, the efficiency of which determines the performance of any given task, culminating in the fulfillment of desires (Aasha Paripooraka) pertaining to that task. Included within the group of sixteen are attractors of the Senses (Sound, Touch, Sight, Taste and Smell), Body (Shareera), Intellectual faculties (Buddhi-Brain, Chitta-Thought, Smriti-Memories), Feelings (Kaama-Love, Dhairya-Courage), Abstractions (Ahankaara-Ego, Naama-Identity, Aatma-Soul) and other entities (Beeja-Seed, Amruta-Longevity). The Anupallavi corresponds to this Chakra:

***Sukaraananaadi Archita Mahaa Tripurasundareem Rajarajeshwareem
Shrikara Sarvanandamaya Chakravaasineem Suvaasineem Chintaye Aham***

(I contemplate upon Rajarajeshwari, the most beautiful of the three worlds worshipped by Vaaraahi and others, the Suvaasini residing in the auspicious Sarvanandamaya Chakra.)

In the Lalithopakhyana, one observes the Mother slaying Bhandasura, who represents ignorance. In this venture, the Mother in the Sri Yantra is flanked by two Goddesses, Mantrini (Tantric saraswathi), who is the Counsellor, and Dandanaatha or Vaaraahi (Tantric Lakshmi), who is Her Commander-in-Chief. Thus the key word ***Sukaraananaadi Archita Mahaa Tripurasundareem*** signifies the boar faced Vaaraahi (Sukaraanana), who, as the commander-in-chief, represents the Aakarshana Shaktis, metaphorically performing the regulation of the sixteen entities listed above. Mahaa Tripurasundareem here represents the Mother in Her form as Bala Tripurasundari, whose Beeja Mantra coincides with the Beeja Mantra of the second Avarana. As Shodashi (sixteen years of age) and Maha Nitya (the 16th phase of the moon), the Mother symbolically represents transcendence over all these sixteen entities. The consequence of such fulfillment of desires is auspiciousness (Shrikara) and bliss (Aanandamaya).

The Second Vibhakti (Accusative case) used here represents the nature of subject-object, with the subject (Aakarshana Shaktis) acting on the object (Organs and Entities). The Aakarshana Shakti, by virtue of the 'Behind the Scenes' nature is termed the Gupta (Hidden) Yogini. The representation here is of the Mother as Durga, subduing the foes.



3. Sarva Samkshobhana Chakra

The third Avarana and the eight petals within forms the residence of eight Goddesses known as the 'Ananga Shaktis'. Translated as bodiless (An-Anga), these Goddesses represent eight actions – respiring, grasping, moving, creating, excreting, sacrificing, holding and perceiving. These eight are the actions, which when carried out at desired times enable activation and regulation of the sixteen organs listed in the second Avarana. For this reason, this Avarana is known as the Agitator or Excitor (Samkshobhanam).

The Madhyamakalam of the Anupallavi corresponds to this avarana:

Divaaakara Sheetakirana Paavakaadi Vikaasakaraya

Bheekara Taapatrayaadi Bhedana Dureenataraya

Paakaripu Pramukhaadi Praarithita Sukalebharaya

Praakatya Paraaparaya Paalito Dayaakaraya

(I have been graced by the manifest of both the supreme (para) and empirical (apara), who has the Sun, Moon and Fire as Her three eyes, who removes the three sufferings caused by Nature, God and Man, and who is the beauty-filled form worshipped by Indra and others.)

In the Bhagavad Gita, talking about the nature of action, Lord Krishna explicitly states that any and all action (Karma) necessarily falls under one of the three Gunas – namely Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic. These are represented in Kundalini Yoga by the three chief Naadis – Ida (Tamasa), Pingala (Rajasa) and Sushumna (Sattva). This triad is seen as the three eyes – left, right and third eye represented as moon, sun and fire respectively.

Thus the keyword, *Divaaakara Sheetakirana Paavakaadi Vikaasakaraya*, through its fine symbolism, highlights the activities performed by the Ananga Shaktis, through the three modes.

However, as Ramana Maharishi highlights, every Karma, apart from reaping its own enjoyment, also sows the seeds for further Karma. Thus, from this network of Tri-Guna Karma, arise the three kinds of sufferings – Adhibhautika, Adhidaivika and Adhyaatma, caused by misalignments of Nature, God and Man. It is only through realization of the Self (Paraapara) that the Jnana of such Realization, as fire burns the Karmas completely.

The third Vibhakti, or Instrumental case used highlights how the Ananga uses the Aakarshana as an instrument, earning itself the name Guptatara (Beyond the Hidden) Yogini. The representation is of the three eyes of the Goddess, signifying the three Gunas of Karma.



The second and third Avaranas together represent the nature and fulfillment of Karmas, with the release from Karma signifying Self-Realization, which in turn forms the central theme of the Vedas and Upanishads. Thus, these Avaranas are known as Vaidika Darshanaangi.

4. Sarva Saubhaagya Daayaka Chakra

Saubhaagya translates to auspiciousness, or in other words, completeness without deficits and obstacles. This is achieved by a set of 14 Goddesses represented as the 14 triangles of this Avarana. These 14 Goddesses are representations of the 14 most important Naadis (Circulatory Channels) in the body, through which the vital energy flows. By proper maintenance of these channels and thus the smooth flow alone can one ensure that all organs and entities are well nurtured and thus capable of performing all the activities of the third Avarana. Subsequently, flawless performances of activities result in lack of deficits and obstacles (Saubhaagya). Thus, auspiciousness can be traced to these 14 Naadi Goddesses.

The opening lines of the Charanam pertain this Avarana:

Srimaatre Namaste Chinmaatre Sevita Ramaa Hari Eesha Vidhaatre

(Salutations to the Universal Mother, who is pure Consciousness and worshipped by Lakshmi, Vishnu, Shiva and Brahma.)

The keyword here is ***Hari Eesha Vidhaatre***, referring to the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. The connecting link between the three Gods is the river Ganga. Starting from Brahma's Kamandalu, the river flows washing the feet of Lord Vishnu as Trivikrama, and is later caught within the Jada of Shiva as Gangadhara, before flowing as an endless perennial river into the ocean.

Spiritually, the Ganga represents the level of consciousness, Jeeva. Starting from earth (creator Brahma), it arises to the feet, representing Paataala Loka. Protected in its journey by the Protector Vishnu, From there, it slowly makes its way up the 14 worlds (represented by the 14 triangles), to the Satya Loka. From here, it flows to the Sahasraara Chakra, where the destroyer Shiva completely annihilates ego and false senses of identity. Upon the destruction of ego, the Jeeva merges into the infinite consciousness that is ParaBrahman, which is none other than the Sri Maata. Thus, the flow of Ganga, representing the 4th Avarana, and thus the consciousness represents the circulatory network running from the Paataala to Satya Lokas, resulting in Saubhaagya.



The fourth Vibhakti (Dative) used represents submission, where the individuality (as Ganga), is subject

to the Mother, the infinite ocean of Consciousness (Chinmaatre).

The Yogini is the traditional (Sampradaaya) Yogini, signifying the traditional path from Paataala to Satya Loka, and 14 universes deriving existence from the sun form the concept of Saura Darshanaangi.

5. Sarva Artha Saadhaka Chakra

Sarva Artha Saadhaka translates to successful accomplishment, and as per the Bhavana Upanishad, the ten triangles of this Avarana, called 'Bahir dashaara', represent ten Goddesses, termed the Praana Shaktis.

These ten Goddesses are the manifestations of the vital life force (breath) as Praana in various organs. It is the presence of such Praana that give meaning and significance to the Naadis, and thus perform actions and regulations. The simple test of whether a person is alive or not relies on examining the breath, and once the breath stops, life ceases, and that intricate network of circulatory channels, organs, body and mind, simply rots, decays and decomposes, vanishing into oblivion. Praana is the true Artha Saadhaka. By virtue of sustenance of life, the Praana gains honor and is known as the Kulotteerna (honored) Yogini. In the next lines of the Charanam, one sees:

Vaamaadi Shakti Poojita Paradevatayah Sakalam Jaatam

(Everything is born out of the Paradevata, who is worshipped by the three Shaktis of Vama, Jyeshtha and Raudri.)

The keyword here is ***Sakalam Jaatam***, referring to the source (Praana), from which everything mentioned in the Previous Avaranas (Sakalam) is born (Jaatam). Mention of the source necessitates the fifth Vibhakti (Ablative case).

The three Shaktis of Vama, Jyeshtha and Raudri represent Iccha-Jnana-Kriya or the trio of Mahakali, Mahalakshmi and Mahasaraswati, as well as the three Gunas of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Thus, these Shaktis represent the A, U and M, which together form the Pranava Omkara, the aspect of the Mother from which everything arises. The representation is thus of Ganesha, whose very form is Aum.



6. Sarva Rakshakara Chakra

Even though breath is the single most important element to the sustenance of life, it can be maintained only at the right conditions, explaining why life exists on earth and not on other planets. Key among such conditions is temperature.

Thus, the ten triangles of the sixth Avarana, called the ‘Antar Dashaara’, consist of ten Goddesses, known as Agni Shaktis, each of which maintain the right warmth and temperature for the corresponding Praana of the ‘Bahir Dashaara’ to function properly. Thus, protecting breath and life itself from collapsing, this Avarana is known as the Protector (Rakshakara). In the next lines of Charanam, Dikshitar sings:

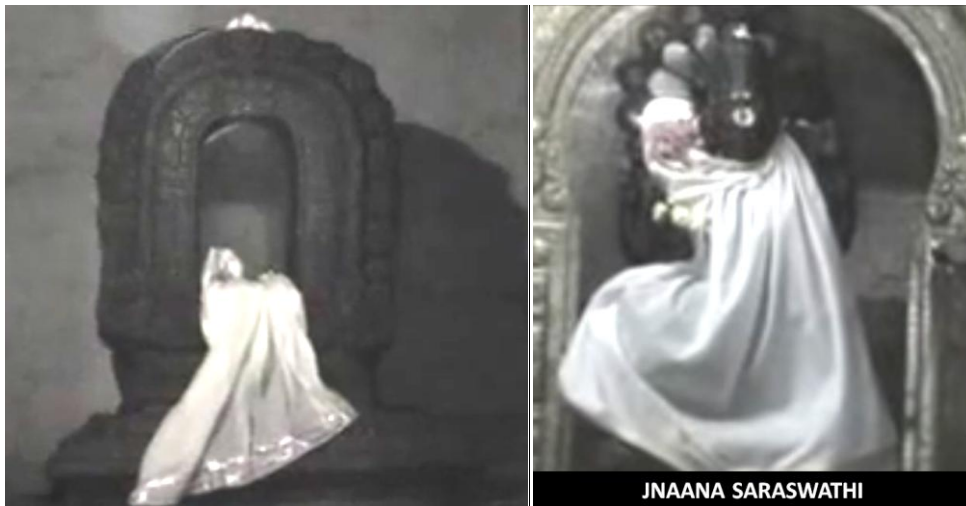
Kaamaadi Dvaadashabhir Upaasita Kaadi Haadi Saadi Mantra Roopinyah

(She is the Panchadashi Mantra worshipped by the twelve devotees starting with Manmatha.)

Kaadi, Haadi and Saadi refer to the three versions of the fifteen lettered Panchadashi Mantra of the Mother in Sri Vidya, and the letters Ka, Ha and Sa are also an allusion to the three parts of this Mantra. The reference to this Mantra highlights the concept of Aksharas. Aksharas, or the 51 letters of the alphabet are the audible manifestations of the 51 vital concepts beginning with Amruta (Creation) and ending with Kshama (Moksha) that sustain the universe, and everything can be traced functionally to one or more Aksharas.

Viewed as modes of vibration of the fundamental wave Aum, Aksharas generate energy through their vibrations. This energy radiates forth, rendering conducive environment for sustenance of life. For this reason, the Yogini is termed Nigarbha Yogini. The keyword, denoting the significance of Aksharas is ***Mantra Roopinyah***.

The twelve devotees - Kaama, Manu, Chandra, Kubera, Lopamudra, Agastya, Nandi, Soorya, Vishnu, Shiva, Shanmukha and Durvasa, and the reference here emphasizes the importance of Aksharas and Mantras, irrespective of one’s philosophical and spiritual outlook. The representation of this Avarana is the Akshara Peetham, with the 51 Aksharas embossed, enshrined behind the Kamalambal shrine.



The sixth Vibhakti, or Possessive case denotes the intricate relationship where the Agni Shakti completely protect and owns the Praana Shakti. Together, these Avaranas correspond to the vital life force that pervades the entire universe, as Praana, as Aum and as the Aksharas. By this pervasive nature, they contribute to Vaishnava Darshanaangi.

7. Sarva Rogahara Chakra

Rogahara translates to elimination of ailments. In the song 'Sri Guruna', Dikshitar mentions "Vikalpa Roga Vaidyena", suggesting that the root cause for diseases is the Vikalpa or thought.

Thoughts arising from the mind (known as Chitta Vritti), with a false sense of I (Ahankaara) embedded within them, form the single main source of all ailments, physical and mental, by assigning the sense of 'doership' and the sense of 'experiencer' to every activity performed and every sensation felt. Also, this illusion (Maya) causes a false sense of distinction and difference, giving rise to partiality, favorability and love-hate (Raaga-Dvesha) duality in the mind. The only cure for such a Roga is wisdom or Jnaana, which is why the 8 triangles of this Avarana are represented by the eight Vashini Devatas (Goddesses of Wisdom and Speech). Further in the Charanam, we see:

Premaaspada Shiva Guruguha Jananyaam Preetiyukta Macchittam Vilayatu

(Let my mind be ever immersed in Her with Bhakti, who is the beloved Mother of Guruguha.)

The keyword here is ***Shiva Guru Guha***, which refers to Subrahmanya, the secretive Guru of Shiva. Shiva, as Sadashiva has five faces, representing the five forces of nature (Pancha Bhoota). Subrahmanya, as Shanmukha has six faces, where five faces are the same as Sadashiva, whereas the sixth is termed Adho-Mukha (looking inward). Even in the representation of Venkatesha as the Mother, the right hand facing outward is Vinayaka, whereas the left hand facing inward is Subrahmanya.

The significance here, and the representation of this Avarana is the child God Subrahmanya as Guha or Swaminatha, enshrined in Swamimalai as the Guru of Shiva, with the central theme of His teaching being Guhya or looking inward.



The explanation is that understanding the Pancha Bhootas and all its derivatives to be impermanent with the nature of Maya, one must turn the attention inwards towards the Self, residing in the heart or the HrudKamala, which is the source of all (Janani) as well as real and permanent.

The importance of the Guru is also stressed here, and as Ramana Maharishi says, the Guru both gives a push from outward towards the heart, as well as pulls the devotee from inward. By its secretive nature (to look inward), the Yogini is named Rahasya Yogini. The seventh Vibhakti Locative case is used to stress the concept of residing in the Self. The Vashini Vaak-Devas representing the eight sensations (pleasure, pain, hot, cold, beauty, Tamas, Rajas, Sattva) which are global and independent of any particular organ in the body. These sensations are the primary aspects of distinctions and differences through which Shakti, as Maya manifests. Thus, this Avarana is known as Shaakta Darshanaangi.

8. Sarva Siddhiprada Chakra

Siddhi prada translates to Successful Completion and Fruition, and in particular it references to the fruition of Atma Jnaana emphasized in the previous Avarana. With this context, the Siddhi Prada, which is the central triangle consists of three Goddesses, representing three levels of manifestation.

Bhagamaalini represents Ahankaara, where a distinct identity of 'I' prevails. Vajreshwari represents the Mahat, which is the first glimpse of the infinite Self, understood intellectually through Jnaana. Finally, Kaameshwari represents the Avyakta (Unmanifest), found on destroying the Ahankaara. Quietening the mind through meditation (Nidhidhyaasana), in the absence of all sensations and thoughts, also leaving the 'I' thought, one reaches that blissful state of trance (Samaadhi and Nishtha), which can only be explained as bliss. This journey is one from the Dvaita to Advaita, through destruction of Ahankaara.

In the Charana Madhyama Kaala, Dikshitar sings:

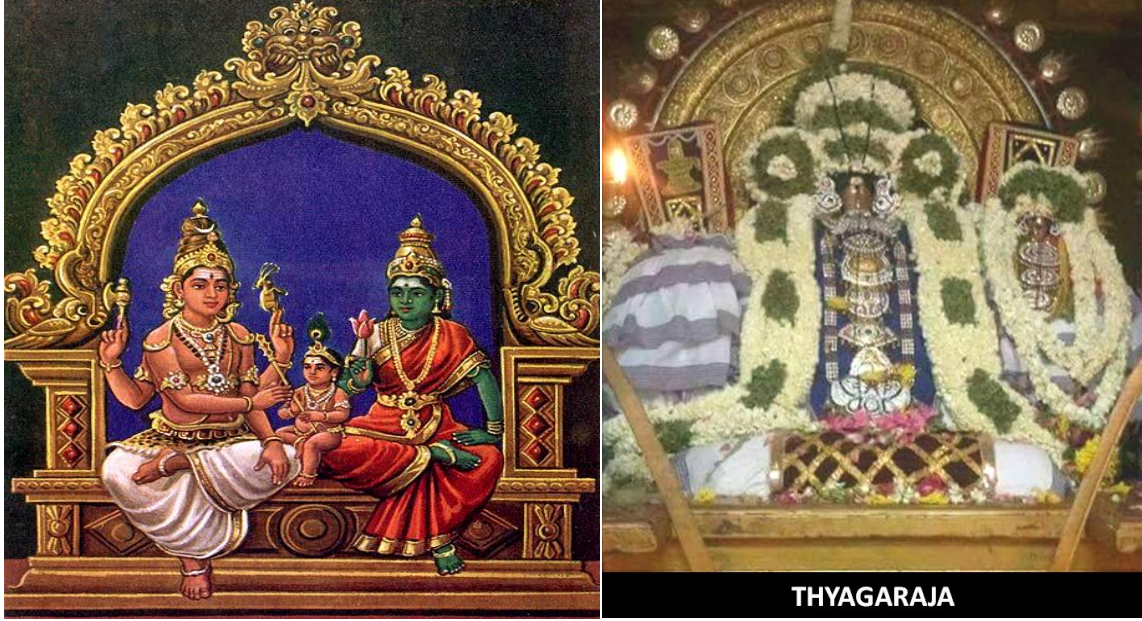
Brahmamaya Prakaashini Naamaroopa Vimarshini

Kaamakalaa Pradarshini Saamarasya Nidarshini

(You are the Prakasha, the radiance of pure Brahman. You are the Vimarsha, reflective of name and form. You display the Kaamakalaa union. You reveal the true identity of one's Atma.)

The Prakaashini, which is pure existence resplendent with Brahmamaya is Shiva. The Vimarsha, reflecting the Prakaasha's attributes as name, form etc is Shakti. The union of these (***Kaamakalaa Pradarshini***) gives Skanda. The understanding of these three directs one to the understanding of Mahat and finally the Atman (Avyakta). The Yogini is Ati-Rahasya (beyond the secretive Rahasya Yogini of the previous Avarana).

The representation too continues the thread from the previous Avarana, where the Disciple (Shiva), Preceptor (Swaminatha) and God (Janani) are now placed on a single pedestal, highlighting the oneness of the Knower, Knowledge and Known (Jnaana-Jnaatru-Jneya). The form of all the three together, which is the representation of this Avarana is Somaskanda, split as Shiva+Uma+Skanda. This is enshrined as Tyagaraja, along with Kamalambal in the Tiruvarur temple.



By using the Eighth Vibhakti (Sambodhana Vibhakti), Dikshitar portrays the devotee calling out to the Mother as the Self within. This represents the journey from Dvaita, where seer and seen are distinct, to their merging in Advaita. Embodying the fundamental concept of Shiva, where half of Shiva is Shakti, this Avarana is termed Shaiva Darshanaangi.

9. Sarva Aanandamaya Chakra

Right at the centre of the Sri Yantra is the Bindu, representing the last stage of the Samhaara Krama where one reaches the Absolute Parabrahman in the form of the Mother. At this stage, completely destroying Ahankaara, and the fallacies and impermanency of Maya and its derivatives such as mind, body, world, space, time, memories, senses, feelings, thoughts and so on, one finally realizes the Self in all its glory, understanding it to be the only Reality and forever drenched in this infinite ocean of pure, unalloyed bliss (Aanandam). This is precisely the last Avaranam, the Sarva Aananda Maya Chakra, and the Yogini, further to those of the last two Avaranas is termed 'Paraapara Ati Rahasya Yogini'. In the Madhyamakala of the Pallavi, Dikshitar sings:

*Sripurabindu Madhyastha Chintamani Mandirastha
Shivakara Manchasthita ShivaKaameshaangastha*

(She is in the centre, the Bindu of the Sri Yantra, in the wish-fulfilling Chintamani Palace. She sits on the seat that is Shiva Himself, and as the part of Shiva Kaameshwara.)

Dikshitar resorts to tradition, and being the focal point of the Navaavaranas and hence all of Sri Vidya, Dikshitar portrays in this section, the very form of the Mother Lalitha as described in the Tantras and other texts. With the keyword *Sripura Bindu* referring to both the Sri Yantra as well as the Kshetra Tiruvarur, the representation of this Avarana is the form of the Goddess Lalitha Maha Tripurasundari, seated in the Chintamani Palace.



While the various aspects of the imagery is discussed in detail in many texts and treatises, some of the more important points are as follows:

1. The five deities forming the seat – Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Eeshwara and Sadashiva, forming the Pancha Brahma represent the five acts of Creation, Preservation, Destruction, Veiling and Grace.
2. The Paasha and Ankusha represent the love-hate duality which is of the nature of Maya and must be transcended.
3. The bow and flowery arrows represent the five senses and mind, both of which must be brought into control in order to attain the Self.
4. Lakshmi and Saraswathi serving the Goddess denote Rajasa and Tamasa Gunas with the Goddess Herself denoting Sattva Guna.
5. Finally, even the imagery of the Goddess, as well as the Yantra, are only considered intermediary forms to help the Sadhaka. With the achievement of Jnana, the sadhaka moves into Nirguna Upasana, where form becomes meaningless, and the only useful aspect in this imagery is the blissful smile of the Goddess, signifying ‘Aanandam’ that is Parabrahman.

Corresponding to the perception of the Mother as the very being (‘Bhava’) of bliss and transcendence (‘Sham’), this Avarana is termed Shaambhava Darshanaangi.

Conclusion

In this article, the masterpiece of Dikshitar and by extension all of Carnatic Music, namely the ninth Avarana Krithi of Sri Yantra worship in Aahiri Ragam is discussed in detail, diving deep into its philosophical and spiritual significance. The song is understood to the philosophies of all the nine Avaranas into a single composition, merging seamlessly the Vibhaktis, Yoginis, Avarana concepts and Devatas. Thus, it is concluded that this song is a pinnacle of Muthuswami Dikshitar, of Carnatic Music, of Navavarana Concept and of Sri Vidya itself, extolling Kamalambal by viewing the Mother Lalitha as the very Sat-Chit-Anandam Parabrahman.

Appendix

List of Devatas in Nava Avaranas, according to Khadgamala Sahasraakshari Vidya

Siddhi Devis	Maatrukas	Mudra Shakti
Anima: Niyati Laghima: Veera Rasa Mahima: Adbhuta Rasa Eeshitva: Bhayaanaka Rasa Vashitva: Karunaa Rasa Praakaamya: Kutsa Rasa Bhukti: Haasya Rasa Iccha: Sringaara Rasa Praapti: Raudra Rasa Sarvakaama: Shaanta Rasa	Braahmi: Kaamam Maheshwari: Krodham Kaumaari: Lobham Vaishnavi: Moham Vaaraahi: Madham Maahendri: Maacharyam Chaamunda: Punyam Mahalakshmi: Paapam	Sarvasamkshobhini: Muladhara Chakra Sarvavidravini: Svadisthana Chakra Sarvakarshini: Manipura Chakra Sarvavashankari: Anahata Chakra Sarvonmaadini: Visuddhi Chakra Sarvamahaankushe: Ajna Chakra Sarvakhechhari: Sahasrara Chakra Sarvabeeja: Kalaa Chakra Sarvayoni: Turiyaateeta Chakra Sarvatrikhanda: Aatma (soul)
Aakarshana Shaktis Kaamaakarshini: Prithvi Bhoota Buddhyaakarshini: Teja Bhoota Ahankaaraakarshini: Mind Shabdaakarshini: Ears Sparshaakarshini: Skin Roopaakarshini: Eyes Rasaakarshini: Tongue Gandhaakarshini: Nose Chittaakarshini: Legs Dhairyaakarshini: Hands Smrutyaakarshini: Vaayu Bhoota Naamaakarshini: Mouth Beejaakarshini: Procreative organs Aatmaakarshini: Aakaasha Bhoota Amrutaakarshini: Appu Bhoota Shareeraakarshini: Excretory Organs		Ananga Shaktis Anangakustume: Speaking Anangamekhale: Grasping Anangamadane: Moving Anangamadanaature: Procreating Anangarekhe: Eliminating Anangavegini: Tyagam Anangankushe: Grahanam Anangamaalini: Upeksha
Naadis Sarvasamkshobhini: Alampusha Sarvavidraavini: Kuhu Sarvaakarshini: Vishvodhara Sarvaahladini: Vaaranaahasti Sarvasammohini: Jihvaa Sarvastambhini: Yashovati Sarvajrumbhini: Payasvini Sarvavashankari: Gaandhaari Sarvaranjini: Pooshaa Sarvonmaadini: Shankhini Sarvaarthasaadhini: Sarasvati Sarvasampattipurani: Ida Sarvamantramayi: Pingala Sarvadvandaksayanankari: Sushumna	Praanas Sarvasiddhiprade: Praana Sarvasampatprade: Apaana Sarvapriyankari: Vyaana Sarvamangalakarini: Udaana Sarvakamaprade: Samana Sarvadukkhavimocini: Naaga Sarvamrutahaprasamani: Koorma Sarvavighnanivarini: Grahara Sarvangasundari: Devadatta Sarvasaubhagyadayini: Dhananjaya	Agnis Sarvajne: Rechaka Sarvasakte: Paachaka Sarvaisvaryaprade: Soshaka Sarvajnanamayi: Daahaka Sarvavyadhivinasini: Plaavaka Sarvadharaavarupe: Kshaaraka Sarvapaapahare: Uddhaaraka Sarvaanandamayi: Kshobhaka Sarvarakshasvarupini: Jrumbhaka Sarvepsitaphalaprade: Mohaka
Vaakdevatas Vasini: Cold Kamesvari: Heat Modini: Pleasure Vimale: Pain Artune: Desire Jayini: Sattva Sarveshvari: Rajas Kaulini: Tamas	Paradevatas Kameshwari: Avyakta Vajreshwari: Mahat Bhagamaalini: Ahankaara	