



## Navagraha Krithis of Cuddalore M. Subramaniam

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**Abstract:** Krithi is the most common compositional form in Carnatic music. Krithi or a song, in general, can be composed on any theme, namely, deities, places, historical references, social interactions, etc. Some of these songs, are composed as a set, like Navavarānams, Pancharātnams, and so on. One such set of krithis, in praise of the nine planets of the solar system, is termed as Navagraha krithis. Many composers have written songs on the nine planets. Muthuswami Dikshitar, one of the Trinity of Carnatic music, has composed the Vaara krithis, on the seven days of the week, which relate to seven of the planets, and it is said that the two krithis on Rahu and Ketu, were added as an addendum, later on. This article talks about the Navagraha krithis composed by Cuddalore M. Subramaniam.

**IndexTerms** - Krithi, Navagraha, Navagraha Krithis, Nine Planets, Suryan, Chandran, Angarakan, Budan, Guru, Sukran, Sani, Rahu, Ketu, Ragas, Talas

### I. INTRODUCTION

Suryan, Chandran, Angarakan, Budan, Guru, Sukran, Saneeshwaran, Rahu and Ketu, are considered the nine planets in our literature. They are collectively called as Navagrahas. 'Nava' means Nine, and 'Graha' refers to planets. In Hinduism, the navagrahas, are said to wield a great influence on a person's life. The horoscope of a person born, contains the planetary positions of the navagrahas, at the time of birth. The way the planets move, and at their respective positions in the person's life, determines the action and consequences in life, for that person.

Rituals to please the deities of the nine planets are very commonly performed in temples all over the world. The specific turn of the period of complete revolution of the planets around the Sun, is termed as 'Peyarcchi' in Tamil. All the planets' peyarcchi, is observed with great aplomb in all temples. Special worship rituals are conducted, to appease the deity of the planet, so that they may bring about good times in the life of the individual.

As every individual is believed to be affected by the impact of planetary movements, these also include musicians and composers. Carnatic music composers have been known to have composed songs on these nine planets at various times in their lives. Muthuswami Dikshitar's disciple, was supposed to have been suffering from an incurable stomachache. It is said that, Dikshitar, with his astrological insights, felt that Guru (Jupiter), was not in a favourable position in his disciple's horoscope. Hence, he composed the krithi Brihaspathe, on Guru, in raga Atana; and his disciple got cured by singing this krithi. Once he started with Guru, then Sani, he also completed singing about the five other main planets, as the set of Vaara krithis.

### II. NAVAGRAHA KRITHIS

While Muthuswami Dikshitar started with the composing of Vaara krithis, the krithis on the two sub-planets, or chaayaa-grahas, as they are known, namely Rahu and Ketu, were said to have been added by his disciples later, with the same mudra as their guru. These have now become popular as 'Navagraha krithis'.

There are no known Navagraha krithis set of compositions before this time. However, there are many composers who have written krithis on Navagrahas after his time. Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavathar, has written and composed Vaara krithis, like Muthuswami Dikshitar. Kallidaikurichi E.S. Sankaranayarana Iyer, has composed Navagraha krithis as well.

In this article, we will be discussing about the Navagraha krithis composed by Cuddalore M. Subramaniam. The research scholar is glad to note that, this Navagraha krithis set, is only available as hand written notation from the composer himself, provided to the scholar, by his family. This is not available in printed notation or sung anywhere. The article also strives to educate the musical community of the existence of such a treasurable set of krithis, to add to the Carnatic music repertoire.

### III. NAVAGRAHA KRITHIS OF CUDDALORE M. SUBRAMANIAM

The following table gives the list of Navagraha krithis composed by Cuddalore M. Subramaniam:

Sl. No.	Song	Graha	Raga	Tala
1.	Nalame aruLidum	Suryan	Revagupti	Misra Chapu
2.	Eesanin Sadaithanil	Chandran	Bilahari	Adi
3.	AngarakanE	Angarakan	Pantuvarali	Adi
4.	Chandra kumAranE	Budan	Arabhi	Adi
5.	vEdaNgaL pOtridum	Guru	Begada	Roopakam
6.	Sukkira BhagavAnE	Sukran	Shanmukhapriya	Adi
7.	Sooriyan MaganE / Eeswaran pattam petra	Sani	Atana / Mohanam	Adi
8.	Sarpatthin roopanE	Rahu	Vasantha / Punnagavarali	Adi
9.	Gnaanatthai tharubhavanE	Ketu	Desiya Thodi	Adi

### IV. STRUCTURAL AND LYRICAL ANALYSIS

#### 4.1 STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

The following points are observed while analysing the structure of these compositions:

- All the songs are composed in the krithi format, namely, all contain a defined Pallavi, Anupallavi, and Charanam
- All the krithis contain only one charanam
- All songs have two lines in Pallavi, two in Anupallavi, and four lines in Charanam

#### 4.2 LYRICAL ANALYSIS

Following points are observed while analysing the lyrics of this set of krithis:

- The very first line of the Pallavi, tells you the name of the deity as follows:
  - Suryan - Nalam aruLidum Surya murthy
  - Chandran - oLi tharum MadiyE (Madi means Chandran in Tamil)
  - Angarakan - AngarakanE aruLpurivaai
  - Budan - Sowmyanenum BudanE
  - Guru - vEdangaL pOtridum 'Guru' deva
  - Sukran - Sukkira bhagavAnE
  - Sani - eeswaran pattam petra Sani bhagavAnE
  - Rahu - Sarpatthin roopanE rahu devanE
  - Ketu - Ketu devaa

- The second line of the Pallavi or Anupallavi, always mentions the Rasi, or the Zodiac sign, which is influenced by this deity:
  - Suryan - Simha rasikku adhipaa (Simha Rasi)
  - Chandran - Kadagatthin adhipaa (Kadaga Rasi)
  - Angarakan - Mesha Vrischika rasigaL naadanE (Mesha and Vrischika Rasis)
  - Budan - Mithuna Kanya Rasi
  - Guru - Meena Dhanusu raasiyinai aaLbhavanE (Meena and Dhanur Rasi)
  - Sukran - Rishaba Thulaa raasi
  - Sani - Makara Kumbha Raasi
  - Rahu - North Lunar node
  - Ketu - South Lunar node
- The Charanam lines talk about the deity's respective gem, millet / grain, flower, etc. This is of great significance in the Navagraha homams / rituals performed, where they keep a cloth in the correct favourite colour, the gem that is supposed to appease the deity, flower and grain used for worship, and so on.
- Other important parts of the lyrics for these compositions mentioning some of this information are given below:
  - Suryan - maNIyil maaNikkamum, malar senthamarai
  - Chandran - veNNiram soodiyum AraLiyum aNivaai
  - Angarakan - sheNbaga poovum Sivappu aadayum
  - Budan - pacchai payirum veNpattup priyanE
  - Guru - pushparaaga rathinamum Pacchai kadalayum
  - Sukran - veN thaamarai veLLiyum vayiramum
  - Sani - karuneela vastiramum kaakkai vAhanamum
  - Rahu - maNIyil gOmEdagamum Durgayai poojai seidaal nalam tharuvaai
  - Ketu - vaidoorya priyanE Sennira aadayum
- The composer has used his mudra 'Paataleepura daasan' in this set of krithis
- In the hand-written notation, the krithi on Sani (Saturn), seems to have been changed by the composer later. Initially, the lyrics are written as Sooriyan maganE Sani BhagavAnE. But later, the composer seems to have changed it to Eeswaran pattam petra Sani BhagavAnE. This seems to have been a conscious change from the composer's perspective, since this planetary deity, is the only god who has received the title of 'Eeswaran', apart from the Lord Shiva himself. Since this is a unique feature of this deity, the composer must have felt the need to change the lyrics of the song, to highlight this to prominence, in the first beginning line itself.

## V. MELODIC AND RHYTHMIC ANALYSIS

### 5.1 MELODIC ANALYSIS

Following are the observations while analysing the krithis from a melodic perspective:

- The apt choice of the raga revagupti, evoking the serene mood of the early morning dawn, which brings out the Sun God from his sleep over the night time. This is very beautifully portrayed in this song, with the perfect feeling of awakening the whole world
- Arabhi is the only Ghana ragam used in this set of krithis, composed on deity of Budan
- Pantuvarali and Shanmukhapriya are the only two melakarta ragas used in this set. All others are janya ragas
- The composer seems to have changed his mind regarding the ragas set for the songs on Sani and Rahu

- Sani changed from Atana to Mohanam. In this section though, the lyrics had changed as well. Hence the research scholar opines that the Atana raga probably suited more, for the lyrics of the Sooriya devan petra version of the song, whereas the Eeswara pattam petra version, has been written with the notation in raga mohanam
- Rahu has two versions in the hand written notation itself, namely Vasantha and Punnagavarali. Even though the raga is different, and the notations correspondingly vary, the lyrics for both the versions are the same; basically, the song has been set in two ragas, probably depending on the mood of the composer
- The song on Chandran (Bilahari) and Guru (Begada) bring out the clear picture of the raga. The characteristic phrases, graha, nyasa swaras, and patterns, clearly concludes that the composer is a musician of par, at a very high standard
- The song on Ketu in Desiya Thodi is unique, since, this is Thodi mostly used without the Pa note. This is considered a very ancient form of Thodi and has a very folk, as well as, pure feeling to the rendition of the raga

## 5.2 RHYTHMIC ANALYSIS

The following observations were noted while analysing the rhythm of this set of krithis:

- The krithi on Surya is very aptly set in Misra Chapu Tala of seven aksharas. It is said that the deity Surya, rides a chariot with seven horses
- The krithi is Begada is set to Roopaka tala. This krithi reminds us of the famous Anudinamunu Kavumayya of Patnam Subramania Iyer in the same raga, and same tala
- All the other seven krithis are set in Adi tala
- Lots of amazing porutthams, or patterns are seen in how the composer has handled the raga phrases in the notation

## VI. ASTROLOGICAL REFERENCES

When we talk about planets, their movements affecting the human individual, and determining the horoscope, they also, automatically lead into the subject of astrology.

As highlighted in the section of lyrical analysis above, we see that, of the nine planets, seven planets lord over the twelve zodiac signs or raasi. The other two planets are called chaaya grahas, or the shadow planets, which stay behind the main seven planets, to enhance the effect of their planetary motion, on the individual.

As with swaras in Carnatic music, the comparison to the planets and zodiac, starts in the basic level, as follows:

- There are seven basic swaras in Carnatic music, namely, Sa, Ri, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni. There are seven basic planets, Surya, Chandra, Angaraka, Buda, Guru, Sukra, and Sani. There are also seven Sapta Talas in Carnatic music, the basic seven talas, in which, the alankaarams are composed, even to be taught to the beginners of Carnatic music
- Of these seven notes, two are non-moving, Sa and Pa, which have only one variety. The other five have two varieties each; the lower one called the Komal version, and the higher one, called the teevra version. This gives us  $10 + 2 = 12$  swaras, 12 Swarasthanas, which brings us to the 12 signs of the Zodiac

The following table gives a gist of the notes, to the zodiac signs, with their versions. Note: we have only one Sun and one Moon; so, we consider them as just one note each, assigned to one zodiac sign each. Please note that in the earlier sections, the Raasis are based on the Sun, and the zodiac signs highlighted below are the moon signs. The concept remains the same.

Sl. No.	Swara	Planet	Zodiac		Raasi	
			Komal	Teevra	Komal	Teevra
1.	Sa	Sun	Leo		Simha	
2.	Pa	Moon	Cancer		Kadaga	
3.	Ri	Mercury	Gemini	Virgo	Mithuna	Kanya
4.	Ga	Venus	Taurus	Libra	Rishabha	Thula
5.	Ma	Mars	Aries	Scorpio	Mesha	Vrischika
6.	Da	Jupiter	Sagittarius	Pisces	Meena	Dhanusu
7.	Ni	Saturn	Capricorn	Aquarius	Makara	Kumbha

## VII. CONCLUSION

Cuddalore M. Subramaniam is a very versatile composer of the twentieth century. Among his compositions, many group krithis are available. One such is the Navagraha krithis. These krithis bring out the essence of the planets worship, with all its individual salient features. Each of the krithis clearly states, the following essential points:

- Name of the deity
- Deity's lineage (if applicable) - for example, Sani is the son of Surya, Budan is the son of Chandran, etc.
- Worshippers of the deity
- Features of the planet - for example, red colour for Mars (Angarakan), slow-moving for Saturn (Sani), and so on
- Gem associated with the planet
- Colour (of cloth offering) associated with the planet
- The God associated with removing the obstacles caused by this planet's movement
- Vehicle of the deity
- Rasi or Zodiac sign, associated with the planet / deity

Seeing such a detailed information in every krithi, the research scholar feels that, the composer must have surely been inspired by the minute descriptions provided by Muthuswami Dikshitar in his compositions. The Navagraha krithis of this composer is an amazing set of krithis, and will for sure be, a pleasure for the students of music to learn, and for the Gurus themselves, to impart such in-depth knowledge to their own disciples, and to the musical community, in general.