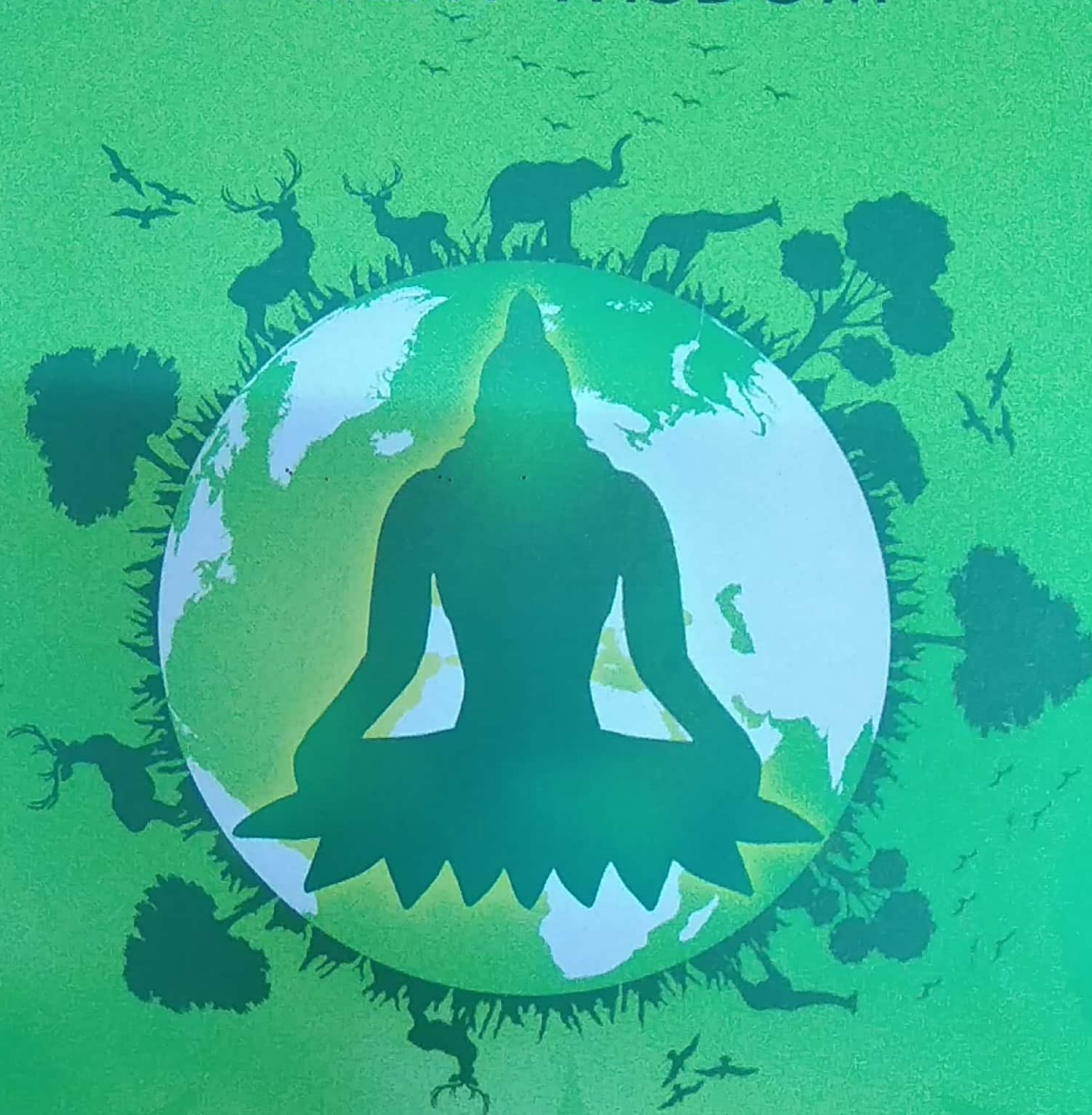


# ECOLOGICAL AWARENESS ENSHRINED IN THE ANCIENT WISDOM



Prof. K. V. Suresh  
Dr. T.G. Sreekumar



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## ECOLOGICAL RESPONSIVENESS PRESERVED IN THE MUSICAL WISDOM

*Dr. Manju Gopal*

On an observation of the different types of music all over the world, from the classical to the folk, rap and pop music, one can identify that most of these have nature either as theme or as imagery. Folk songs of India reflect the life of common folk which also express natural events like the advent of new year and harvest season. Bihu of Assam, Punjabi Bhangara, Utharkhani of Uttar Pradesh, *Ñjāttuppāṭṭu* and *Koytupāṭṭu* of Kerala are examples of folk songs that reflect the labour undertaken by the common folk related to nature. (Gopal Manju, 2015) In classical songs of India especially in Carnatic music, one cannot easily identify the themes related to nature, but the usage of imageries are innumerable. (eg: Induvadana, Meru samāna etc.) There are certain exceptional composers of 18<sup>th</sup> century like Muttuswami Dīkṣitar who sang on the pañjabhūtas and navagrahas.

### **Pañcabhūtas and the Kṛtis on them by Dīkṣitar**

The consecration of temples on pañjabhūtas and navagrahas had been an inspiration to Dīkṣitar for composing kṛtis on them. The temples dedicated to panchabhutas are located in the Deccan plateau, one in Andhra Pradesh and the other four in Tamilnadu.

Divinity is a concept that leads one to understand what sanctity is and what leads one to virtues and later to liberation. When divinity and sanctity are ascribed to the five elements of Air, fire, earth, space and water it becomes essential to preserve them. When temples are created for these elements, one is able to do sadhana on them. The temples on the five elements are dedicated to Lord Śiva. Hence the eternal truth exposes the oneness of the divinity with the environment or the elements of nature.

The Taittirīya Upaniṣad describes the five elements as the five layers of protection that we wear. From paramatman or supreme soul, the *Ākāśa* came into being, from *Ākāśa* came *Vāyu*, from *Vāyu* came *Agni*, from *Agni* came *Ap* and from *Ap* came *Pṛthvi*, from *Pṛthvi* came food, from food came man.

The element of earth represents the soil, the grass, the mountains etc. It also represents the hand, hair, body, flesh, teeth, skin and nails of the body. The *ḥṛti* on *pṛthvi* is 'Cintaya mākanda mūla kāndam' in raga Bhairavi, which has been composed on the Lord Śiva of Ekāmbreśvarar temple at Kāñcīpuram. *Ap* or water represents the rivers, seas, oceans and waterfalls. It represents the blood, tears and all liquid inside the body. The *ḥṛti* on *Ap* or water is 'Jambūpate' in Yamunākalyāṇi rāga on the deity of Tiruvanaikkaval at Trichi. Fire or Teja represents the Sun, Moon and volcanoes. It also represents the heat and energy inside our body. The *ḥṛti* is *Aruṇācala* in *Sāraṅga rāga* composed on the deity at Tiruvaṅṅāmalai. The air or *vāyu* represents the air, wind, cyclones etc. it is the moving air inside the body. '*Śri Kālahastīśa*' in Huseni is the *ḥṛti* on *vāyu* composed on the deity at *Śri Kālahasti* near Tirupati. The space or *ākāśa* represents the sky. it represents the hollow part in our body. The *ḥṛti* is '*Ānanda Naṭana prakāśam*' in Rāga Kedāra on the deity at Chidambaram.

### **Ḥṛtis on Rivers and Plants**

If Muttuswami Dīkṣitar is credited with singing on pañcabhūtas, it was Saint Tyāgarāja who sang on the glories of river Kāveri and the medicinal plant *Tulasi*. In the *ḥṛti* '*Sarivedalina in Asaveri*', the composer invites all of us to feast our eyes upon the great river. He poetically writes 'the river is going to her husband's house, fulfilling the desires of all devotees. The river does not distinguish between the learned and the unlettered, the saint and the sinner, the emperor and the pauper. It distributes its bounty to everyone's contentment. He tells in the *caraṇa*,' She hurries with great speed and

frightening roar and at another, she flows with eternal karuṇa, this boon giver, the Kāveri.' The mentioning of river Kāveri is seen in many other kṛtis especially the *Thiruvaiyyar kṣetra kṛtis*. Thiruvaiyaru is known as *Pañcanāda kṣetra* since it is the meeting place of five rivers, *Kāveri*, *Vadavār*, *Vennār*, *Vettār* and *Kudamurutti*. The reference to the bountiful nature of the river is found in Purandara Dāsa's (a composer belonging to Karnataka) compositions also. Infact, Kāveri is considered as the life line of Tamilnadu and Karnataka.

Tyāgarāja has composed a few kṛtis on *Tulasi* considering the plant as the incarnation of the Goddess. For example in the *kṛti*, *Tulasi Jagadjananī* in *Saveri*, he calls her as the mother of the Universe who removes sins, the source of rivers, the abode of Gods. *Tulasi Māhātmya* describes the plant as the root for all sacred rivers, in whose middle are all the celestials, in whose crown are all the devatas. The same idea is introduced by Tyāgarāja in the *carāṇa* of the *kṛti*. In another *kṛti*, *Amma Ravamma*, he sings 'one attains salvation by watering the plant, who is the incarnation of Mahālakṣmī.'

Thus, the thoughts of the ancient seers which led to the consecration of temples on the elements of the nature were promoted by the composers of music belonging to different centuries. Music serves as a strong medium to convey these ideas. In this age when the relationship between humanity and earth is in a critical condition, it is sure that music can enhance the perceptions of the value of natural world. Realizing the educative value of music and its power to quicken thought and awaken sympathy as also to promote harmony of action, it is essential to bring forth the environmental issues through music. (Gopal Manju, 2015)

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