

# NINE PHASES OF BHAKTI IN THE KRITIS OF PAPANASAM SIVAN

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## ABSTRACT

*This article explores the concept of the nine-fold faces of Bhakti (Navavidha Bhakti) as expressed in the kritis of renowned Carnatic Music Composer Papanasam Sivan. Drawing from his rich compositional legacy, the paper delves into how Sivan's works encapsulate the gradual progression of a devotee's journey towards the Divine, from initial faith to the ultimate surrender. Each of the nine phases is examined through a detailed analysis of select kritis, highlighting Sivan's nuanced depiction of spiritual evolution. Through this exploration, the article aims to shed light on Sivan's contribution to Carnatic Music as not just an art form but as spiritual practice, reaffirming his role in the propagation of Bhakti through the universal language of Music.*

**Key words:** Papanasam Sivan, Navavidha bhakti, Kritis, Raga, Tala

## Introduction

Bhakti, the path of devotion, occupies a central place in Indian philosophy and culture. The concept of Navavidha Bhakti, as outlined in the Bhagavata Purana and other scriptures, provides a structured approach for spiritual seeker to connect with the divine. Brahmasri Papanasam Sivan masterfully captured these phases of Bhakti in his Kritis. His compositions are rich in devotional fervor and poetic elegance.

### Navavidha Bhakti (Nine phases of Bhakti)

Navavidha Bhakti refers to nine forms of devotion or pathways through which a devotee can express emotions, surrender and connection to the Divine, described in Hindu philosophy. In music particularly in Carnatic music Bhakti plays a significant role in the lyrical and emotional content of compositions.

1. **Sravanam** (Listening),
2. **Keertanam** (Singing),
3. **Smaranam** (Remembrance),
4. **Padasevanam** (Service to the Lord's Feet),
5. **Archanam** (Offering Worship),
6. **Vandanam** (Prostration),
7. **Dasyam** (Service),
8. **Sakhyam** (Friendship) and
9. **Athmanivedanam** (Complete Surrender).

### 1. Sravanam (hearing or listening)

Devotional music itself fulfills this form of Bhakti. By listening to kritis and other sahitya oriented musical forms the devotee connects with the Divine. Sravanam may be regarded as the inceptive phases of Bhakti. It is easy to practice and it centers round listening to God's name, hearing His glory, powers and praises and His attributes. Hearing mere sounds reminding of God and Godly things is an indirect influence leading to Bhakti. In Sivan's kritis both types of influences leading to Bhakti can be traced.

In the kriti of Papanasam Sivan **Nambinadu**'s Charana portion directly expressing the Sravana bhakti aspect. Sivan says that he has **heard** the devotees singing in praise of Devi.

- Nambinadu kutrama- Hamsadhvani Raga –Adi Tala<sup>1</sup>

Kapadamillamal bhajikkum adiyavarum

Pugazh vadu ketten kashtamellam vidiyum enru

'I heard that even the humble devotees who worship without deceit are praised and that all their suffering will vanish'.

It is a deeply devotional line; emphasizing sincere, guileless worship and the idea that true bhakti brings relief from sufferings

## 2. Keertanam (Singing)

Singing Kritis or Bhajans is a direct act of Keertanam. Keertanam is singing the names, the glorious attributes and valorous exploits of the Lord. In the Devotional literature the utterances of the lord has been given a unique place. Sivan extols the greatness of singing of Lord's name and attributes in a number of kritis.

The kritis detailed below are some illustrations of Sivan's songs dealing with Namaskankeertana aspect of Bhakti.

- Sri rama nama bhajanai sei- Atana Raga-Adi Tala<sup>2</sup>

Sri rama nama bhajanai sei maname Sheer valarum ihapara sugam tarum

'Oh mind, chant the holy name of Sri Rama, it will cultivate noble virtues and bestow joy both in this world and beyond'.

Sivan says that for all those endowed with the faculty of speech, the ambrosia of Rama Nama is the highest bliss in life; and the repeated chanting of the same will be delightful.

## 3. Smaranam (Rememberance)

This phase of Bhakti relates to constant remembrance of the Almighty. Sivan in his kritis emphasis this phase too.

- Unnai ninaindale- Chenjurutti – Adi<sup>3</sup>

Unnai ninaindale inbam oorud Ullam nirai kapaleesa

'O kapaleesa, just thinking of you joy arises and heart over falls with bliss'.

Sivan says in the kriti Unnai ninaindale that the mere meditation of lord will have abiding influence on one, as giving extreme happiness and removing all worries and anxieties, and the non meditation will result in despair, the whole world appearing as dark.

## 4. Padasevanam (Service to the Lord's Feet)

Worship of and at the Holy Feet of the Lord, and doing service thereby to God has been an ancient practice of devotees, handed down from even the Vedic, and Puranic epochs. Several of Sivan's songs allude to this practice, in expression of his own Bhakti.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Papanasam Rukmini Ramani-Keerthanamalai book 4, Rajan&company printing, Madras1986

<sup>2</sup> Papanasam Sivan-Keerthanamalai book 3, Rajan&company printings, madras 1971

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Papanasam Rukmini Ramani-Keerthanamalai book 5, Vijay print services, Madras 1977

- Devadeva padam- Khamas Raga-Adi Tala.<sup>1</sup>

Devadevan paadam panivai

Perinbam adaivai maname

‘O mind, bow at the feet of Lord of Lords you will attain supreme bliss.’

Sivan assures the mind through the kriti ‘**Devadeva padam**’ that by service at the feet of the Lord Supreme, by shunning the unreal worldly happiness, eternal bliss will be attained.

## 5. Archanam (Offering Worship)

Archanam, worshipping the almighty with offering of flowers and chanting of Vedic hymns and sacred scripts, is the most common form of Bhakti, followed largely and widely, both on ordinary and on ceremonial occasions. Sivan’s kritis illustrate this phase also in some of his kritis.

- Mooladhara murthi-Hamsadvani Raga-Adi Tala<sup>2</sup>

Anbodu thumbai arugam pullai edut

Archanai sei dalump odum (ulagil)

Tunbam tudaittu per inbam tarum varadan

‘Even if one offers with love just simple herbs like thumbai or Arugam pul in worship, all sorrows will vanish in this world.’

Sivan’s submits himself to Lord Ganesa in the Kriti **Mooladhara murthi** and asserts that worshipping him with the offering of Lauca flowers and Cynodon grass would efface all miseries and confer blissful happiness on the devotees.

## 6. Vandanam (Prostration)

In this phase of bhakti, salutation, obeisance and reverence of the supreme Lord is implied. Example for this kind of bhakti can see in Sivan’s kritis.

- Sharade veena vaadana- Devagandhari Raga – Adi Tala<sup>3</sup>

Sharade veena vaadana visaarade

Vande tava pade

‘O Sharada (goddess Saraswathi), exoert in playing veena, I bow at your feet.’

This is a line of reverent praise of Goddess Saraswathi, the deity of knowledge, music and arts, who is often depicted holding a veena. Papanasam Sivan expresses both devotion and humble surrender to Her divine knowledge and grace.

## 7. Dasyam (Service)

The phase of Bhakti Dasyam relates to service to Lord, servitude and bondage. Sivan’s kritis give examples of Dasya bhakti also. Papanasam Sivan’s mudra **Ramadasa** itself is an example for this kind of bhakti.

- Anjaneya paramananda – Arabhi Raga- Adi Tala<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dr.Papanasam Rukmini Ramani-Keerthanamalai book 5,Vijay print services, Madras 1977

<sup>2</sup> Papanasam Sivan-Keerthanamalai book 3,Krishna publishing House, Madras,1933

<sup>3</sup> Papanasam Sivan-Keerthanamalai book 4,Lakshmi Bhagyam Printers, Madras,1973

Maithilee soka vinasha sudakara

Maarutapriya tanujatmavataam vara

Madabhara nisachara lankabhayankara

Mangalakara Ramadasa hridgochara

‘O Anjaneya, you are the moon like comforter who ended Sita’s sorrow; beloved son of wind God, supreme among the self controlled, you are the terror of arrogant asuras in Lanka, the bringer of auspiciousness, who resides in the hearts of Rama’s devotees.

In this kriti Sivan glorifying the real great Ramadasa Hanuman, you are the flame of courage in the hearts of the devoted. Glory to you, Anjaneya the divine servant of Sri Rama.

## 8. Sakhyam (Friendship)

This phase implies intimate companionship with lord.

- Vava madivadanane – Paras Raga- Adi Tala<sup>1</sup>

Muraleedhara nandakumara ninaindurugum

Enai kan parai iravinaiyirul parandodavum

Ni ennod kalandu vilayaadavum kanindu

‘O flute playing Nanada kumara, look upon me, whose heart melts in remembrance of you. With compassion, please come play with me and let the darkness of my karmas be scattered.’

In Vava madivadanane Sivan beckons Lord Krishna, on whom he meditates with intensity, to come to him to dispel the evils and misdeeds in life and to play with him.

## 9. Athmanivedanam (Complete Surrender)

Athmanivedanam or complete Surrender is expressed in some of Papanasam Sivan’s kritis. For example in

- Aiyam thiruvadiyai – Purvikalyani Raga – Adi Tala<sup>2</sup>

Nanavida noikal ellam onru koodi

Naadi narambukalotu elumbaiyum

Urukinalum maanaabhimaanam

Izhandu udal uyir tudittalum marupadi

Aayiram piravigal eduttalum.

‘Even all kinds of diseases strike at once, melting the bones along with the nerves and veins, even if one loses all ego and pride and the body and the soul are writhing in pain, even if one takes a thousand births again’.

Sivan says with determination that he will not leave the sacred feet of the Lord under any circumstances, whether under physical afflictions or under extreme extraneous adversities and even if he takes thousands of births again and again.

<sup>4</sup> Dr.Papanasam Rukmini Ramani-Keerthanamalai book 5,Vijay print services, Madras 1977

<sup>1</sup> Papanasam Sivan-Keerthanamalai book 3,Alliance company, Madras,1949

<sup>2</sup> Papanasam Sivan-Keerthanamalai book 2,Krishna Publishing House ,1933

## Conclusion

Papanasam Sivan holds a distinguished place in the world of Carnatic music for his deeply devotional compositions that mirror the Bhakti rasa in its purest form. Papanasam Sivan did not compose any group kriti works like Swathi Thirunal or the Musical Trinities. However, we can find works based on Navavidha Bhakti principles in his Kritis. These Kritis not only convey the philosophical depth of Bhakti but also serve as exemplary models of lyrical beauty, emotive ragas and rhythmic grace. Through his kritis Sivan has made the essence of devotion both accessible and experiential, leaving a lasting legacy that continues to inspire musicians and spiritual seekers alike.

## References

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