Muthuswami Dikshitar at 250 – the Carnatic Trinity composer from Tiruvarur

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Why in news: On 3 November 2026, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman released a ₹250 commemorative coin marking the 250th birth anniversary of Carnatic composer Muthuswami Dikshitar, at Swatantrata Bhavan, Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Varanasi – the city where Dikshitar spent several years of study.

Key points

- Birth: born at Tiruvarur (Thanjavur region), son of Ramaswami Dikshitar; sources differ on the year of birth – 1775 or 1776 (24 March). He is the youngest of the Trinity of Carnatic music with Tyagaraja (1767) and Syama Sastri (1762) – all three were born in Tiruvarur.
- Kashi years: he travelled to Varanasi (Kashi) with the ascetic Chidambaranatha Yogi and studied there; exposure to North Indian (Hindustani, Dhrupad) music gave his compositions a blend of North and South Indian traditions.
- Signature: his mudra (signature word) is 'Guruguha', a name of Lord Muruga (Subramanya), used in all his compositions; he composed about 450–500 works, mostly in Sanskrit (a few in Manipravalam), and was a veena player whose music reflects the veena's gamakas.
- Group compositions: the Kamalamba Navavarana Kritis – 11 pieces (a dhyana kriti, nine avarana kritis and a mangalam) on Goddess Kamalamba of Tiruvarur, based on the nine layers of the Sri Chakra, with 'Kamalamba' used in all eight grammatical cases (vibhaktis); he also composed the Navagraha Kritis on the nine planets.
- Western touch and last days: his 'Nottuswara Sahityam' set Sanskrit words to British band tunes he heard around colonial Madras, mostly in the scale of raga Shankarabharanam; he died in 1835 at Ettayapuram (now Thoothukudi district), later the birthplace of Mahakavi Bharati.

In the exam: TNPSC – Trinity of Carnatic music and their common birthplace (Tiruvarur), match the composer with the mudra (Dikshitar – Guruguha), Kamalamba Navavarana and Navagraha kritis, place of death (Ettayapuram); UPSC Prelims – statement-type questions on Carnatic composers, their languages and mudras, and North–South (Hindustani–Carnatic) interaction; commemorative coins in news.

Questions

1. Which of the following is the mudra (signature word) used by Muthuswami Dikshitar in his compositions?

A. Syama Krishna
B. Guruguha
C. Padmanabha
D. Tyagaraja

2. Consider the following statements about Muthuswami Dikshitar:
1. Like Tyagaraja and Syama Sastri, he was born in Tiruvarur.
2. His Kamalamba Navavarana Kritis are dedicated to the presiding goddess of the Madurai Meenakshi temple.
3. He died at Ettayapuram.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A. 1 and 2 only
B. 2 and 3 only
C. 1 and 3 only
D. 1, 2 and 3

Answers with explanations

1. **B) Guruguha** – Dikshitar signed all his compositions with 'Guruguha', a name of Lord Muruga (Subramanya).

2. **C) 1 and 3 only** – Statement 2 is wrong: the Kamalamba Navavarana Kritis are on Goddess Kamalamba of Tiruvarur.

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